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GOSPEL TRUTHS

*Presenting Christ and the
Christian Life*

By

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DEDICATION

To the Members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, who gave devout audience as these sermons were preached from their historic pulpit, this volume is dedicated—a grateful memorial to their many tokens of appreciation during Twenty Years of Pastoral Service.

FOREWORD

THIS little volume of sermons has been prepared in response to repeated appeals from the people who heard them from the pulpit. With some slight discrimination, they have been chosen from a cabinet of upwards of two thousand discourses. There has been little or no change, except where some purely local reference demanded it. In their preparation for pulpit use, two thoughts were constantly kept in mind: to preach Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, with all their redemptive significance; and to implant in the minds and hearts of those who listened to their deliverance, those principles which underlie Christian character and conduct. There is no effort to develop distinctive doctrines; yet every sermon aims to have some fundamental doctrine as its basic part. It is the living relations of the doctrine, the doctrine in actual life, that is designed, above all else, in this series. The heart right, the life in line with it; the doctrine sound, the practice conformed to it: such has been, throughout, the underlying thought. As this new volume goes forth with its message of truth and grace, may it be instrumental in quickening in the hearts of those who read it a deepening sense of spiritual certitudes and an increasing purpose to realize them in their lives.

JOHN EDWIN WHITTEKER.

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I

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Matt. 5-13-16. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

If Jesus had been a mortal like ourselves, His sayings would have been handed down as the most apt in any tongue: He certainly would have had a place among the sages. His parables, His illustrations, His figures, were all taken from the very heart of nature and made to fit every phase of human life. He could take the commonest thing and use it to simplify the lessons He taught: He could take the commonest event and make it serve a lofty spiritual purpose. And the tone was always a serious one—a sublime one. You never laugh when you read His parables: you never smile. The most frivolous person assumes the serious, sober attitude when he reads the sayings of Christ. He could not be frivolous in any case: he would choke if he were to try it.

We are held spell-bound at what Jesus calls, "These sayings of Mine." We never lose interest. Somehow, it all seems to come from heart to heart; and it binds heart to heart. Herein lies the charm, the fascination, the entrancing influence. And that is why men said, "Never man spake like this man." Time has not diminished His power over the masses: distance cannot do it. His words

enchain us as much as if He uttered them in our presence. I am led to this reflection because of the simplicity of the text as well as its power to illustrate the point He sets out to make: "Ye are the salt of the earth"; "Ye are the light of the world"; "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." This takes us into the realm of everyday life.

1. "Ye are the salt of the earth." The chief quality of salt is to save: it is also pleasant to the taste. Its main use, however, is the preservative one: it is constantly employed in the home for that purpose. And Jesus tells His disciples that they are salt. These poor fishermen—the world would rot if they were not in it. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom. The Lord withheld His hand from blotting out Israel for Moses' sake. And we are saved for Christ's sake. The preservative power of the religion of Christ: wherever it enters, everything is better because of it. If every person in these United States were a Christian at heart, there would be no prison-houses, no reformatories, no criminal cases before our courts, no drunkards on our streets, no social evil, no divorce: this land would be one vast Paradise. As it is, the Christian element is so strong, so positive, so alive, that a mighty restraint is put upon the prevailing vices and crimes. Take the Christian element out of our legislative acts; take the Christian element out of our local government; take the Christian element out of our schools and colleges; take the Christian element out of our homes; and it would be more tolerable to dwell in the desert with wild beasts: we should be safer there.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt is pleasant to the taste. How flat and stale our food would be without it! But sprinkle just a little on this or that, and the whole thing is made palatable. What kind of a partner would you choose for life: a man or woman of a coarse, Christless nature? The friends you select: would you pick out the profane, the blasphemous, the brutal, beastly set. Take

the Christian graces, "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance": what a sweet savor they put into the life; And the people that manifest these graces are the ones we delight to choose. The purer the life, the sweeter the fellowship that grows out of it.

The disciple of Christ, the salt of the earth: the world of men would decay if he were not in it. But what about himself? Is it possible that the Christian can fall from grace? possible to lose grace? St. Paul teaches it, and Jesus here suggests it. Let us hear His words and be warned as to the possibilities of our own lives: "But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." If the saltiness goes out of the salt, it becomes useless dirt. It looks like salt on the outside, but the inner quality is gone. It cannot preserve: it can only defile.

The salt of Christianity was put into our hearts when we were baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." By that act, we were brought into the fellowship of Christ and made heirs of eternal life. And the purifying salt of God's grace was used to sanctify as well as to save. The saving salt, therefore, has entered into our spiritual natures, not only to sanctify our lives but to be as salt to other lives. At this point, there are two questions which we cannot escape.

(a) The first is as to ourselves within ourselves. The salt of God's grace has been imparted to you and me. Are we doing that which will keep the Gospel salt in our hearts? The Word of God: do we so read it and ponder it that it seasons our soul and all our life? The services of God's house: do we so wait upon them and so use them that the fruits of faith increase? If the salt is exposed to all kinds of weather, little by little the savor goes out of it. And the soul that is exposed to all kinds

of world-influences, is bound to lose the savor of God's grace. It is this that accounts for the indifference of so many Church people, for the gross neglect of so many Church people. The savor of the Gospel has gone out of their hearts: they thus cast themselves out to be trodden under foot. I am afraid that the average Church member has no more than just enough of the salt of God's grace to keep him from the decay and death that are incident to our corrupt nature. The charge is severe; but I fear it is true.

(b) The salt does not keep its saltiness for its own sake alone: it exists for the preservation of things that are perishable. We are not to live unto ourselves—simply to secure the salt of the Gospel and keep it. We must have a preserving influence on other lives. In short, our saltiness must go out to serve. We must bring people into the Church so that the salt of God's grace may season their hearts: we must help to keep them there so that they do not lose it. In our daily companionships, we should be as salt to keep our friends from the rottenness that infects all community life. The places we go; the people we meet; the pleasures we choose: these should receive the impress of our sanctified selves. Everything we touch should be better because we have touched it: everyone we meet should be better because they have met us. Every place we go should be better because we have gone there. And this influence should not be a noisy one: it should be silent as salt.

These two properties, then, should enter into every Christian life: the salt that saves, the salt that serves. We are saved by God's grace: we serve for Christ's sake. If the salt of the heavenly Spirit is in our hearts with sanctifying might, then it must go out and put the savor of Christ into other hearts and lives. The silent influence of each Christian life should work mightily for the regeneration of the race.

2. "Ye are the light of the world." Light and salt have quite different effects. Light makes things grow: salt keeps them from decay. They both serve a great purpose, yet so unlike. The light of the sun: nothing could grow without it. Blot the sun out of the universe, and you would kill everything that lives. And now Jesus says to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." The light of their lives was to go out into the world to enlighten other lives. How was this to be done? Before He went back to the Father whence He came, He told them: He said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It was a large task, but they undertook it. And when their days were done, they left the work to their disciples. And that has been going on from age to age, until at last the work has been handed over to you and me. And the demand is the same, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." For we, too, are the light of the world, in the thought of Christ, just as surely as were His disciples. And if we are not doing our share, it is because we lack either grace or grit.

The Christian light of our life putting light into other lives: that is what Christ expects of you and me. We have an influence and we dare not be blind to the fact. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid." There it stands: it says nothing, it does nothing, and yet it makes an impression upon every one who sees it. The steady influence of a well built life: that is the thought here. The city can be seen only when the light shines upon it, or when the light shines out of it. And only as we walk in the Light—the Light shining down upon us or shining out through us—will people see us and value us aright. The Christian life should be above the common un-Christian life. It should not, indeed, lift itself up in pride: it should be of such a nature that people will look up to it and admire it and be blest of it. "A city set

on a hill cannot be hid." You cannot hide your influence. Somebody will be impressed by it for better or worse; somebody will get good or bad out of it. If you come regularly to church, someone may follow your example; if you stay away, someone may do the same because you do it. In school-life, in work-life, in home-life, you are under somebody's gaze: you cannot help it. You are affecting them for weal or woe: you cannot hide your light.

And you should not hide it. We have another figure to illustrate that point. Jesus says, "Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." If a man lights a candle, he doesn't do it to conceal its light: if so, why light it at all? It would but leave him in darkness the same as before. And if he did light it and hide it, we should conclude that there was something wrong with his mental part. And now, since the light of truth has entered your heart, what are you going to do with it? Will you try to hide it? It is wonderful how personal this text becomes; and we cannot get away from it. The candle was made to give light; and we were created anew in Christ Jesus to give light. All the light of our lives should go out into other lives. And as the light springs from life to life, the whole world will become ablaze with it. We know there are many dark places everywhere. Whole nations sit in darkness: whole tribes sit in darkness: whole communities sit in darkness: whole families sit in darkness. And there are individual hearts in which there is no light. It is a sad fact, and we know it.

Yes, we know the fact; but how shall we remedy it? I am always glad that Jesus spoke of the candle—the smallest possible light. If He had spoken of the sun in its splendor, as its rays shoot millions upon millions of miles through space, and lighten up this world from pole

to pole, we could have found no parallel to our lives. The little light that we could give, in comparison, wouldn't be worth while. But a candle, a little flickering flame which, held up to the sunlight, is but a dark spot: how small its light: how short a space it reaches! But it can fill a house! Your Christian light: fill your house with it, and God will ask no more. Fill your schoolroom with it, and God will ask no more. Fill your shop with it, and God will ask no more. Fill your church with it, and God will ask no more. Let the circle be large or small; if the light is pure, people will see it and be blest by it.

But we must not attempt impossibilities. A candle will shine so far, and you cannot make it shine any farther. And your light and mine has its limit. Let us not try to make it fill the universe, when it cannot reach beyond the walls of one small house. We must, therefore, avoid two extremes: we must not hide it; we must not force it. We must give out the light that by God's grace, is kindled in our hearts. And so Jesus says, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." He doesn't say, "Make it shine," but "Let it shine."

There is a point here—and deep significance. There would be no light if there was no material candle back of it. Good works are the candle of our lives: in their performance, we shine. Whatever enters into our lives, these are the works of our lives. And through these we give out the light of other lives. The light of our life is not the mere profession we make: it is not our Sunday conduct, which men sometimes put on and off as they do their Sunday clothes: it is the daily outshining of the spirit of grace which dwells in our hearts. As we go in and out of our homes; as we go up and down our streets; as we take up our daily task and finish it; the Christian should shine out in every syllable, in every motion, in every act—not because we force it, but because

it shines out of itself by its own inherent light. And then men will glorify the Father in heaven! Did I say that our light does not shine beyond the little limits of our daily life? It actually reaches the throne of the Father in heaven above! What a boundlessness to the light of our lives!

The salt of the earth, the light of the world, a city on a hill, a candle in the house: each of them is a figure of what we might be, of what we should be, of what by God's good grace we can be. As true disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us give ourselves wholly unto Him, and we shall become all that he designs us to be.

II

THE QUESTION WITH A QUIBBLE

Matt. 9:9-13. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The blessings of private life: the privilege of speaking our thoughts, of acting out our impulses, with no watching, waiting public to take account of it! A man in public life has the questioners and the quibblers and the critics at his heels all the time. The eyes of the world are upon him: he cannot escape the universal gaze. And the public lets him know it.

The text furnishes a case in point. Jesus had wrought some marvelous cures: they were out of the ordinary line. And the multitude looked on in amazement. But He moved right on unaffected by their praise. His life had a great central purpose; and He would fulfill it. That purpose involved the choice of twelve men who should act, above all else, as His witnesses. And so, He picked them out, one by one, till the number was complete. We have come to the point where He adds one to the list. The name of this new disciple is Matthew—the man who afterwards wrote the Gospel which bears his name—the man who wrote the words of the text. He was a Publican—an office which every devout Jew held in perfect abhorrence.

He gathered taxes for Rome; for that great world-empire laid heavy imposts upon her provinces. It was her method of keeping up her armies, her excesses and her idolatries. And for a Jew to exact these taxes from his own people, was reckoned a traitor's part. But Jesus called this man away from his post of profit. And at the call, "Follow Me," he left the receipt of custom and was numbered with the Twelve.

As soon as Matthew became a follower of Christ, he made Him his home-guest. He followed Christ; and Christ followed him. Christ fed him on spiritual meat: he fed Christ on the meat that perishes. Christ gave him His best: he gave Christ his best. He gave Christ more than a feast: he gave Him his heart. He had been a man of the world; and men of the world gathered around his table. There is a sort of transition here. Up to this time, publicans and sinners had been his only guests; but now, along with these, Jesus and His disciples are feasted at his home. After a while, Jesus and His disciples will be his only guests; and publicans and sinners will feast elsewhere. He will not banish them from his home; but they, by the logic of moral life, will eliminate themselves. At this point, we come to the real purpose of the text.

1. The Pharisees, somehow, looked in on the feast. They were prying in everywhere—not for the good they could do, but to find fault. And they said to the disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" They saw only the outward act: they were callous to the noble purpose back of it. They were the clean set, the precise set, the nasty-nice set. We have them in our time: people who are too dainty to come in social touch with the common classes; people whose manners are most exact, whose grammar is perfect, who have a most refined taste; and yet, they are so puffed up with pride, so conscious of their superior place, that they scorn the publicans and sinners of every-day life.

These Pharisees, whose religion consisted in outward rites in which none but men of their own quality and kind might take part: they could not understand Christ. To eat with publicans and sinners meant ceremonial defilement. It did violence to every religious scruple, and insulted their delicate religious sense. That is not a religious life: it is a religious farce. And Jesus would reprove it. And so He throws Himself into the very face of their religious niceties and confounds them by His utter disregard for their set formalities. There was a great glowing purpose in His heart; and He would fulfil it: at least, He would not let a few old flesh-proud Pharisees side-track it.

“Why eateth your Master with Publicans and sinners?” Raise that question at any point of His life and what answer do you get? Why did Jesus come down to earth and assume our poor nature? Why did He submit to buffet and abuse? Why did He allow them to nail Him to the accursed Tree? Why did He die? To these questions, and all questions like these, there is but one answer: It was infinite Love manifest for sinners’ sake.

I cannot let this verse pass without bringing this question to ourselves. Why do men sit with publicans and sinners? What takes the most of people where those of sinful habits congregate? If I go among bad people, why do I go there? Is it to be as bad as they are? The one thing that should take you and me among bad people is to draw them away from their badness and make them, at least, as good as we are striving by God’s grace to be. The prime duty, the supreme effort, of your life and mine, along moral lines, should be to draw the wicked away from their wicked works by stirring up some noble sentiment in their hearts; and then surrounding them with such wholesome influences as will enable them to lead sane, clean, honorable, God-fearing lives. That is true Christian service: let us render our share of it.

2. And Jesus makes that thought plain when He answers, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Everybody knows that: but, somehow, these Pharisees had not thought of it. And do we always think of it? These apparently common-place sayings of Christ: what depths of wisdom they contain, and what heights! It is little short of miracle, the way He takes the plain, common, every-day events and makes them teach the profoundest truths that touch upon the universal moral life. Into whose houses are the doctors going every day, with their medicine cases and their surgical instruments? As soon as we see them enter a neighbor's door, we know someone is sick there. And poor sin-sick souls: shall the great Physician pass them by, without a thought as to their wretched estate? Shall He not enter their homes and strive to cure their soul infirmities? Shall He sup with Scribes and Pharisees, bask in the sunshine of their homes, go only where the good live, and spend His speech on foolish flatteries? Is that like the Christ? Is that like Him who stretched His hands out toward the multitude and appealed with the voice of pitying love, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest!"

"They that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." Is that the limit? Do these words cover the thought? Have they no generic sense? Shall we tie them down to what they say, and nothing more? Shall we cling to the letter of this Scripture, or shall we seek the spirit which broadens into all the avenues of our complex life? What we should do is this: Take these words and translate them into every possible form of Christian service. They that are rich do not need our abundance, but they that are poor. They that are happy do not need our sympathy and comfort, but they that are sad and disconsolate. They that are surrounded by a multitude of friends do not need our companionship, but they that are

lone-hearted and shut out from the fellowship of love. It is not a question of sinner and saint: it is a question of actual want—bread-want, social-want, heart-want. Wherever there is need of any sort, we must meet it. If we find it by the wayside, as Christ did, we must follow it into the house, though it take us into dens of vice or the rendezvous of the vile. And we must not give up a single case till we have exhausted all our resources to make a disciple for Christ. If we fail there, all is failure. A heaven-won soul is the only outcome that is worthy of our labor of love in Christ.

There is one thing, above all else, that tries my patience and wearies my spirit: it is the common, senseless complaint, "If I had money like some people, I would do some good with it." There is no doubt that moneyed people might use their means to better advantage. But the vast majority of people are not blest with a superabundance. And when, with good conscience, they have given their good share to the Church, they can do no more. But money is not the measure of useful service: money is the least part of it. How did the Apostles regard it? When Peter and John went up to the Temple and found that lame man at the gate, what did Peter say? "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee." And what he gave was above price: money could not measure it. And that must be the principle upon which the most of us must act, if we would render any service. We may be compelled to say, as did the Apostle, "Silver and gold have I none." But let us not forget also to say as he did, "Such as I have, give I thee." Such as you have: consecrate it; sacrifice it, if need be. And what do you have? Let us count your treasure. You have time: give it. You have a sympathetic nature: give it. You have a cheerful, hopeful heart: give it. Go out, in the love of Christ, and give what you have. There are poor souls hungering for the comfort you can give:

if you have a Christ-filled heart, you cannot withhold it. There are poor, distressed, despairing mortals, the flickering flame of hope all but gone; if you are constrained by the love of Christ, you cannot keep from fanning it into new life. The lonesome lives, the saddened lives, the hearts that are all but breaking to tell their woe, the tempted lives, the fallen lives! And the rich treasures of grace that God has given us! And we use so little of it—so very little of it! Let us resolve that we shall not live unto ourselves; but that we shall live for others' sakes. Let us resolve to do the physician's part—to minister to others according to the deepest needs of their lives by that gift with which God has blest us.

3. It was the Pharisees who made this complaint. Jesus knew the frozen formalities which were the sum-total of their religious life. The Pharisee thought that, by the outward Temple ceremonies, he acquired merit: in short, he put God under obligations to prosper his worldly enterprise. The Church of Rome is infected by the same spirit; and many a Protestant heart is possessed of it. It is the human argument, "If I am good to God, God ought to be good to me." It may not be formulated into so bald a statement; but that is the substance of it. I venture to affirm that you and I have harbored the thought more than once—if not in positive form, at least in negative spirit. In time of sorrow, or misfortune, we have thought, "I wonder what I have done that God has brought this upon me." The same Pharisaic principle is there: it is deep-set in the natural heart.

Jesus here quotes from one of the prophets: it was God's message to just such people as were these Pharisees. And He says, in fact, "I do not need your sacrifices. You cannot enrich me. It is not what you bring me that shows the Christian quality of your heart: it is what you do, in My name, to people like yourselves. Let Me see

you show mercy to these, rather than bring sacrifice to Me." It was a home-thrust: it must have pierced their hearts and laid bare their hypocrisies. They were out-and-out formalists. They would go to the Temple and offer the appointed sacrifice. They would tithe every least thing—the mint and cummin and anise. But they neglected the great Law of Love. They never thought of it: they broke it every day of their lives. They scorned publicans and sinners: they criticized Christ because He ate at their table. They were always picking His acts to pieces. Take any point of dispute: the healing on the Sabbath; the eating with unwashed hands; the plucking of the ears of corn on the Sabbath; the question of fasting: in each and every case, their whole attitude was that of a snarling, bickering, biting spirit. And the hate of hell was beneath it.

And let me tell you, beloved, that right here is where our greatest danger lies. By all means, let us go to church, and worship there. But in doing it, let us not imagine that we are putting God under obligations to bless us. We cannot make God rich by church formalities; and then expect from Him a hundred per cent. But if we come here and worship Him in spirit and in truth, then He will bestow upon us the riches of His grace. And there is but one channel of God's grace. It is not through the self-righteous spirit of the Pharisee: it is embodied in those closing words of the text, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Yes, let us by all means go to church: there is a sad defection in true attendance these times. It is figured in the Gospel account of the great Feast. The supper was set: there was the earnest invitation, "Come." But one and all began to make excuse. And such flimsy excuses! The very same, in spirit, that men make when I invite them to come here. They imagine their excuse fits their case. It doesn't. It is the universal excuse—the one men have

ever made. It is the one the devil puts into their hearts and makes them believe it is true.

Let Pharisees go to the Temple in Pharisaic spirit and for Pharisaic purposes. But let us meet in God's House and worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Let us come here, not in Pharisaic pride, but with the penitence of the publican; and let us cry from the depths of our hearts as did he, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

III

THE HEM OF CHRIST'S GARMENT

Matt. 9:20-21. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

The Gospel of Christ is universal in its scope. It is this that endows it with enduring interest and endears it to the people's heart. If the Scripture were a development of logical inferences, we might not be sure of our logic or our inferences: we might not have the mental grasp to test it or the mental insight to enjoy it. Who of the great mass of humanity can read the books of the sages with pleasure or profit? They are too subtle, too hair-splitting, too critical, too abstract and abstruse, for the average intellect. Only a sage can read a sage. It is quite different with the Gospel of Christ. There we deal with acts—thoughts in flesh and bone. And from these acts, we draw our inferences. Even when we touch the direct teachings of Christ, we touch life—life like yours and mine; and their application to our hearts is evident and irresistible. As to His miracles, they, too, dealt with life—life like yours and mine; and we readily see, we cannot help but see, how admirably they fit our case. We have something, therefore, that the eyes can see and the hands can handle, of the Word of Life. And unless we merely speculate about it, the profit will soon be manifest. Every miracle which Christ performed upon men's bodies, will find its duplicate in our hearts. The blind, the lame, the halt; those bent with infirmities, those possessed with evil spirits; the sick, the paralytic, the dead: what are these but great object lessons to make

plain our spiritual estate. And the Word of Christ, in either case, works the cure.

The woman of the text is burdened with an incurable disease: so like the sin that infects our lives. She has heard of Christ—the wonderful cures He has wrought; and she sincerely believes that He can cure her, and that He will cure her, as He did the rest. And as He cured her of her bodily ailment, so He can make our spirits whole. Let us come in faith, as she came; and we shall be blest, as she was blest. This is simple truth that ought to satisfy every longing heart. Let us now take up the leading facts of this incident and find some parallels that we may contemplate with spiritual profit.

1. A humble manner marks all true approach to the throne of grace: the reverent spirit predominates. In the patriarchal age, men had a deep sense of awe when they came in touch with the divine. It was Abraham who said, "I who am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord." The prophet Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the Temple. Then said he, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." And this woman comes modestly, meekly, behind the Master and touches the hem of His garment. In each case, there was reverent awe.

It must not be otherwise with us. There is a sacredness and a solemnity that attach to the devout recognition of the divine presence. The true worshipper is conscious of it. The demand overwhelms his heart, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." And as he sits in solemn repose, this thought is uppermost: "How holy is this place." We have no "sawdust trail" to hit: we have an altar to which we reverently come. We have no slum-slang to vent from the pulpit: we treat reverent themes with a reverent spirit and in

reverent speech. It is not a superstitious dread that controls our attitude: it is the profound consciousness of the infinite presence of Him who fills with His fulness all time and every place.

Are you so affected when you enter the Lord's House? Do you realize that God is a Spirit, infinite in majesty and might, in love and grace: and do you come here to worship Him in the beauty of holiness? Do you realize the significance of the opening sentence of our service: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"? If God's eyes were visible; if His outstretched hands were manifest; if His voice sounded along these aisles, as it came to Moses in the solitudes, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground": there would be reverent regard for His Holy Name. But the sanctities of the Church have lost their significance. The Holy Court has become a highway for carrying vessels that are foreign to the place; while frivolous thoughts and unseemly acts engage those who outwardly assume the attitude of worship; and their hearts are far from Christ. I would not deify the place; I would not fill it with empty formalities; I would not make it the avenue of Pharisaic hypocrisies: but I would have everyone who enters here, from the least even unto the greatest, to be deeply conscious that this is God's House and that holiness becomes this holy place.

2. This woman followed Jesus in hope of a cure. It is remarkable what kind of people formed His daily retinue. The lame and halt were there; the dumb and blind were there; the sick and sorrowing were there; the weary and heavy-laden were there. And they followed Him to be healed of their infirmities. It was just as He would have it: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick"; "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And you all know that gentle appeal—more than once you have found com-

fort in it, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And people came to Jesus because He had something that met their want: He had something they could not get anywhere else. And men say, How beautiful; how like the Christ! How natural that He should be sought of those whose infirmity drove them to His feet! And where else should they go? As Peter asked, when the alternative faced the disciples, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And so, it was the glory of the ministry of Christ that men, afflicted with all manner of disease, flocked to His side and sought His healing grace.

And should it not still be the same? Is it not the same? Who, above all others, should go to church? The sin-sick soul, the sorrowing soul, the tempted and tried, the poor slave of a depraved appetite, the man overtaken in a fault, the one over whose head hangs some impending fate—every possible condition of sin and short-coming, of weakness and wickedness and woe: these should come within the sacred pale and seek the benefits of Christ's redeeming love. And they should be welcomed there.

What is the common judgment—the common practice? Men actually mock as the procession moves within the hallowed gates. And they exclaim with a significant sneer, "Why do such people enter there!" We do not come here because we are good—not one: note that fact. We come here because we are bad, and we know it. And we want the badness washed out of our natures. We know where we fall short—at least, we should know it. We know the sinful thoughts that have polluted our hearts since we last met here. We know the nasty, spiteful words that have befouled our lips since we last met here. We know the deeds—secret, it may be; open, it may be—that have brought reproach to our name since we last met here. But we have come in spite of these: aye, we have come because of these, to hear the comforting assurance,

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” We have come to hear the declaration of grace, “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is not our goodness that brings us here; it is not our goodness that makes us kneel at the altar and receive the Holy Sacrament: the pressure of sin drives us here as surely as the pressure of sickness drove this woman to follow Jesus and touch the hem of His garment. It is Pharisaic to boast, “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are”: it is the sign of true penitence when we pray, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” In the main, it is the same class of people that follow Jesus today as followed Him when He dwelt among men, full of grace and truth: the leprous in heart, the crippled in life. A few, it may be, follow for the loaves and fishes; but only for a time: when they reach the point of sacrifice, they go back and walk with Him no more.

3. The woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment and she was made whole. It was an act of sublime faith; and Jesus responded to it. It was faith, not superstition, not mere credence: it was faith—a faith that leaped the common bounds; a faith whose greatness was made manifest by the avenue of its exercise; a faith that knew Christ's almightiness and trusted it; a faith that saw the power of God in the hem of Christ's garment. What was that purple edge, the very hem of His clothes? No power, no gift, no healing virtue, without Jesus there. But put the garment on His human nature, which had entered into personal union with the divine; and the very almightiness of God was present to work the cure according to the faith of her who touched it. Aye, but that suggests something that takes us to the very core of our Christian doctrine, and illustrates it.

The Word: what is it? The Bible, the outer garment.

“The words which I speak unto you,” says Christ, “they are spirit, and they are life.” And in touching the Word, through the garment of this printed page, we touch the Christ, and His spirit and life flow into our spirits and lives. It is, therefore, the blessed avenue by which the healing virtue of Christ enters into our hearts.

The Sacrament of Baptism: what is it? It is the garment of God’s grace through Christ. It is not a mere sign of grace: it is the very avenue of grace. It is, as the Apostle declares, the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. And if we touch this Hem of Christ’s garment, we shall have the current of our life renewed according to His gracious promise. This is why He gave the command, “Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And this is why we have the added promise, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.” Doing as He bids, we touch Him through this Hem of His garment; and we know in our hearts that His regenerating might has been active and effective there: we know it as surely as this woman knew that she was made whole.

The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper: what is it? It is the garment through which the virtue of Christ enters into our lives; so that the bread which we break is in very truth the communion of His body and the cup which we bless is in very truth the communion of His blood. The garment was not the sign of Christ’s virtue going out for this woman’s cure: the garment did not represent the virtue of Christ, aside from all healing effect. The garment—the very hem of it—was the material medium through which virtue went out from Christ into the body of this afflicted woman and wrought her cure. And so, the bread is not the sign of the body of Christ; the wine is not the sign of His precious blood: as some Protestants theorize. Moreover, the garment remained a garment—

its edge did not change. Neither is the bread changed into the body of Christ, nor is the wine changed into His blood, as the Church of Rome teaches. Each remains what it was before the sacramental union took place. But as the garment of Christ became the avenue through which the healing virtue of Christ passed into the woman and made her whole; so the bread and wine become the vehicle by which the atoning virtue of Christ passes into our spiritual natures to strengthen and preserve us unto eternal life. And where Christ's virtue is, there is Christ. It is in this lofty, spiritual, yet real sense, that He gives us His body and blood in the Holy Sacrament.

Do you ask, "How can these things be?" "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." If you cannot understand earthly things, how can you expect to fathom heavenly things? With God, all things are possible. Jesus suffered His garment to be the vehicle for conducting healing virtue to this woman and working her cure. And He uses Word and Sacrament as the means of communicating His own human-divine nature, with all its saving merit and cleansing might, to those who use them in faith to the strengthening of their spiritual lives. "This is the Lord's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes."

The account of this cure, therefore, has its practical and its doctrinal side. Let us learn humility from the humble way in which this woman came to Christ: let us assume the reverent attitude when we engage in church service. Let us not come to this place to show that we are good in God's sight: let us come because we realize how bad we are, and seek God's forgiving grace. And let this incident suggest and illustrate the true teaching as to Christ's relation to the means of grace—Word and Sacrament the outer garment which we touch in their use and by which Jesus Christ, with all the virtue of His

atoning merit, is communicated to our hearts with saving and strengthening might. It is the evident teaching of this miracle of love transposed into a parable of grace: it shows both the power and the avenue of the virtue of our Christ.

And now, with a clearer insight into the virtue of Word and Sacrament, may we use each according to God's appointment, as so beautifully and consistently illustrated by the incidents of this woman's cure. Then the virtue which Jesus will impart shall be not only to the strengthening of our faith, but also to our growth in grace and to the blessed hope of everlasting life.

IV

THE POWER OF CHRIST

Matt. 10:1. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

The division of the Bible into chapters and verses is a very useful one; but it has its disadvantages. It sometimes breaks the connection between antecedent and consequent events; and the underlying thought is lost, the force is gone. The text is a case in point. We must go back to the last verse of the preceding chapter, if we would get the real spirit of the words that compose it. Jesus had said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." And He follows it up with the earnest appeal, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." That is the true starting point. If a man sincerely prays for a cause, he will just as sincerely work for it.

We shall do well, in church work, if we study the methods of Christ. We call this a practical age, and it deserves the name. But when it comes to real practical issues, we can learn a great deal from Christ and His Apostles. We are always urging men to give: there is abundant reason for it. But we do not start right: it is a dead start, and that is always a failure. The Apostle enjoined men to be instant in prayer: he knew that all else would follow as a matter of course. It was said of this same Apostle, "Behold, he prayeth": and Ananias knew that the man was ready to receive his sight. And now when Jesus says, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest," we are not surprised that the new chapter opens with the

text, "And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."

1. The very first words of the text are suggestive: "And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples." If we study the Gospels with a little care, we shall find that He called them more than once. Each time it was a little different from the one preceding it. At first, He had simply said, "Follow Me." If He had said more, they might not have hearkened to His voice. Every time the call came, it brought them a little nearer to His heart; it brought them to a fuller consecration of their lives. And every time they went forth to service, they were the stronger for the commission to which they had devoted themselves.

It is not otherwise in our case—at least it should not be. Each call should bring us into fuller service with deeper consecration to perform it. And if we have been true to it, it has endowed us with greater gifts. We get a bigger grasp on the work to be done; we get a nobler enthusiasm as we prosecute it; we get a stronger courage, a keener insight, and a measure of ability that enables us to take up something on a larger scale. By degrees, the voice of the written or spoken Word becomes the voice of the heart; the outward call of Christ is translated into the inner call of our own spirit; and we bend our best strength to Christ's service as the moral and spiritual necessity of our lives. This is the unfailing rule. There are men and women cheerfully giving themselves to church service who, a few years ago, would have trembled at the very thought of undertaking the tasks which they now perform with comparative ease and in which they find their highest delight. We do not have to search for the cause: we find it right here in Christ's promise to His disciples.

2. The text tells us that when Jesus called them, "He gave them power." Men talk learnedly, these days, about the evolution of the moral life. As they mean it, it is the rankest of all heresies. We are dead in trespasses and in sins. There is no process of evolution by which a dead animal or a dead plant can develop into a living state, much less into a higher life. Deadness means decay—a decay that ends in dust. And the soul dead in sin goes down to that death which never dies. It is right here where Jesus' work is manifest. He says, "I am come that ye might have life." And the Evangelist declares, "In Him was life." He puts the power of life into dead souls: He quickens them into newness of life. The very starting point of the renewed life is from Him. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." And at the close of His ministry, He gave this command to His disciples, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The power to live comes from Christ: the power to labor comes from Christ. And so when He sent forth His disciples, He gave them power to work miracles.

That meant much to them: they would have been helpless without it. For He sent them forth to do the thing that was humanly impossible: well might they shrink from it! But when He gave them power, they could say as confidently as did the great Apostle, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." What courage His promise would inspire—and what comfort! For there would be disappointments and discouragements and defeats; but they knew that they could come back to Him who had sent them and He would revive their drooping spirits: He who gave them their strength would certainly renew it. He gave them power! Are there no manifestations of a like power in our lives? Are there not times when we feel that the very power of Christ is in

our hearts: times when we stand ready to do and to dare for His holy cause! Are there not times when we set our foot upon the sin that doth so easily beset, and feel that we could crush it: times when we look calmly and confidently into the face of the loving Christ and are filled with an ecstasy that is all but divine! It is true we cannot remain on this mount of transfiguration and behold without let or hindrance the glory of Christ: the strongest wing must rest. And we are not only brought down among the suffering and sorrowing sons of men: we ourselves sorrow and suffer—many an earth-shaft pierces our hearts. Let us not murmur: it is the Lord who purges our lives. And we have the same blessed assurance that came to the Apostle, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Shall we not, therefore, respond as did he, “Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

3. “He gave them power.” And in doing so He did not lose in proportion as He gave: His supply is an infinite one, and no process of subtraction could lessen it. Every time we put forth power, so much energy is lost; and the time will come when we must renew it. But when Jesus gives power, He gives abundantly and loses nothing by the gift. If we give money, we can count it to the cent: if we give time, we can count it to the minute. But when Christ gives, He gives from the infinite abundance of His grace. When He gives wisdom, He is not made the less wise: when He gives power, He has not lost in might: when He gave His life, He did not lose it. There is an eternal spring that flows from Him to the refreshing of our hearts and lives; but He does not lose a drop of it.

And as He gave power to the apostles, so He will give power to you and me. He will enable us to meet the necessities of our time as surely as He enabled them to

meet the necessities of their time. There is no task in the Church, therefore, which we cannot perform by His grace. And when a man tells me, I cannot do this or that or something else, I believe it—most sincerely do I believe it. But I believe more: I believe that he has not put himself confidently into the hands of Christ and trusted the power of His life to inspire and strengthen and enlighten him for the task which the Church appoints. The same enabling might that the Lord gave to the apostles He will give to everyone that enters into His service. When a man tells me that he cannot give up some vicious habit—something that is eating up his life, he contradicts Christ who is able to save unto the uttermost. He contradicts the inspired judgment of the Apostle, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” When a man tells me that he does not have the gifts for this work or that along the line of Christian service, he contradicts Christ, who gives miraculous power, if need be, to His disciples. And if a man cannot withstand that sin which controls his life, or if he cannot do that work which the Church justly expects, it is not because God’s arm has suddenly grown short: it is because the man has shut the power of Christ out of his heart.

It is the common complaint that the Church of our times lacks in genuine spiritual power. I am afraid there is much truth in it. But why is it? The Church, indeed, has power of a certain sort. It has social power, and entertaining power, and club-life power, and the power of every earthly device; but as for spiritual power, there is so little of it. The love of Christ: how many are drawn into the Church, and serve there, because of it? The love of souls—to snatch them as brands from the burning: how many glow with a holy zeal that the work

of renewal may be accomplished in their hearts? And may we not repeat the question of the Master, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?" He will find method and machinery—enough of it; He will find organization and activity in abundant measure. But it is all on a human plane, and it lacks the power with which He filled His apostles when He appointed them to their holy office.

4. "He gave them power." It was a special power that Christ gave to His disciples—power against unclean spirits, power to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. In short, it was the power of miracle that He gave. He came to perform a ministry of miracles: this ministry of miracles was given over to His apostles. The Church once established and proved divine, there was no further need of a like miraculous might. The power needed to perform a work is not the same all along the line. In constructing a temple, it may be necessary to blast the rock on which to base it; but blast-power is not used to carve its columns or shape each niche and arch. At every step, a new power is needed till all stands out complete. And in the structure of the Church of Christ, at first came the manifestation of outward all-might; that period past, the manifestation was one of inward divine grace. It is the point of which the prophet writes, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." And this miracle of grace is just as directly a manifestation of the power of Christ as were the miracles which the disciples performed in His name.

Jesus gave His disciples power to destroy every evil influence. He never blotted out a single good thing: He never gave the power to do it. He came to destroy the works of the devil and bring in righteousness and peace. His works throughout were works of mercy and love. And now He commissions His disciples to do the same. Is

there a sorrow? He brings comfort to meet it. Is there a care? He gives courage to face it. Is there a burden? He bestows the grace to bear it. And He did the right thing at the right time. He did not tell the man that was blind to rise and walk. He did not tell the man that was deaf to open his eyes and see. He gave the proper cure in every case. And here, too, is where the Church must manifest the power of Christ. When people are hungry, they need something besides the Bread of Life: to read the Beatitudes to a starving man will not satisfy the cravings of an empty stomach. When people are out of work and sorely pressed on every side, a philosophic treatise on the unity of Scripture will not get them out of their trouble. If your house is on fire, your minister will not come in and read the Forty-sixth Psalm and pray for protection and peace. And the Church that is not massing her strength upon such activities as demand her supremest effort, has no proper conception of the commission that her Lord has given her. What is the great need of this hour? What is the greatest curse that rests upon our beloved land and is blighting its budding life? Whatever that is, there our strength must go: and God with us, we shall win for Christ. Yes: we must preach the Gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ—and faith alone; but faith must be a living power in our hearts—one that worketh by love. Yes: you must come to church, and hear the Word, and join in prayer and song of praise; but you must go forth in the strength and grace you get here and work that miracle which the circumstance of your life sets before you as your peculiar task. The Church—each member active according to his opportunities and gifts: the Church, through its disciples, must meet the demands of our age, just as the Apostles met the demands that were uppermost in their age. It was this that made the Apostolic Church a power among men at that time. The same Church lives today; the same

Christ is the Head of it; the same commission continues throughout time. But the work is not done; and we men of this age are chargeable for it. The love of Christ has not changed; the power of Christ has not changed: the fault lies in the instrumentalities; and that comes home to everyone who has named the name of Christ.

Let us, then, each go into serious heart-searching this very moment: and let us find where the trouble lies. And may we each be stirred up to new consecration, redeeming the time, for the days are evil. He who has the power stands ready to put it into our hearts. Let us take of that power, so that it may work through us to meet every bodily and social and spiritual want. In this way, we shall manifest the power of Christ and show that we are indeed His disciples.

V

THE POOR: THEIR CARE AND CURE

Matt. 11:5. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.

There is something unusual about the setting of the text. It is unusual in what it implies. John the Baptist is in prison, discouraged, disheartened, downcast. He had dared to reprove his king; and now he suffers for it. However, he hopes against hope: he hopes, not for his life, but for the cause to which he has given his life. And in his hope, he sends a message to Jesus, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not sit down and write out His claims from Scripture: He could have done it. On another occasion, He said, "Search the Scriptures: they are they which testify of Me." Instead, this is His remarkable answer, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see." He does not appeal to the testimony of Scripture, but to the testimony of His life. The question, these times, is not the bare, isolated one, "What do you believe?" It shifts to the practical side, "How does your faith express itself in your life?" In other words, What are you doing that men may hear and see the faith of your heart? The Christian life is more than a question of doctrinal principles: it involves the added question of an active consecrated service. We are not only to be hearers of the Word: we must also be doers of the work. That is the first side-line to the text.

There is another side-line to it: it is one that lies at its very root. To get the relative value of the text, we

must quote the whole verse: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." No doubt you have felt, as I have, the seeming disharmony here. We look for a climax; but we do not find it: the balancing of thought, the anticipated sequence, is not there. Let us take case after case, so that you may get, clearly, my viewpoint. A blind man comes to Jesus, and He gives him sight. A lame man is brought to Him, and He enables him to walk. The lepers come—ten at one time—and they are cured on their way to the Temple. The deaf man is brought to Him, and his hearing is restored. He stands at the dead man's side and calls him back to life. He fills out perfectly that which is lacking in each case. And so, when the poor man comes to Him, what should we expect but that He would give him riches? At least, He will surely relieve him from distressing want. But instead of that, we read, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them."

In our thought, that does not measure up to the other cases. In our thought, Bibles cannot take the place of bread; prayer, to the hungry man, is no substitute for potatoes. And in the shallow human sense, we are right. But in a deep, vital, eternal sense, Jesus' method is the correct one: He met the direct pressing want of the poor man, just as He met the direct pressing want of the blind and lame, the lepers, the deaf, and the very dead. In each instance, the relief is the exact counterpart of the want. And to show that—to bring it out into the clear daylight of your thought—is my purpose at this time. I have such a supreme faith in Jesus Christ that I would believe there was a true sequence to His thought, though I could not understand it. And yet, there is a satisfaction in knowing that fact answers to fact; and that in all His words and works, there is a perfect balancing of part

with part. Truth does not depend upon our comprehension of it; but that does not hinder us from trying to comprehend it.

When Jesus said, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them," He declared a great principle. He said, in fact, "The Gospel is the fundamental factor in the elimination of poverty." We know how it is in heathen lands: the majority of people are in a starving state. But in Christian lands, the vast majority are in comfortable circumstances. There is a discriminating line running down through the ages; and the cleavage, on the one side, shows an abundance among God's people, while on the other, there is distressing want. I do not mean that every good man has plenty and to spare; and that every bad man is a beggar at the rich man's gate: the case suggested is the very opposite. But I do mean this: I mean that Christianity puts into a man's heart and works out in his life, those moral qualities that make for thrift. It fills him with the spirit of a true independence, which, in the last analysis, is self-dependence. To be exact, What does the Christian religion do for the working classes?

1. In the first place, let me call attention to this fact: The Christian religion exalts Labor. It puts a dignity upon it: it lifts it up to a plane that commands respect. It not only makes the man respected: it fills him with self-respect. It is true, there was a time when the Church regarded labor as beneath the Christian life and detrimental to it. But that was in the Dark Ages. The early Christians were largely working people. The disciples, as you know, were fishermen and tax-gatherers, and the like. St. Paul earned his daily bread by making tents. It was the Church of Rome that put the false estimate upon the workman's life. But the Reformation called the Church back from its false position. It taught that all labor is honorable, if performed with an honest purpose and the work itself honorable. It emphasized the fact

that the man who toiled at his trade could serve God as acceptably as the man who preached the Gospel of grace. It made every man a co-worker with God in carrying out God's plan of building up the race. The commandment, "Six days shalt thou labor," makes plain God's attitude toward work-life.

2. And now, as my second point, note what that does for the laborer if he assumes the same attitude. It ennobles his life. He does not think of the grind of toil and trade. He does not grow restive because it puts a strain upon his muscles. He does not worry over the sweat that goes into it, or rebel against the slave-side of it. For every calling has its sweat and its slaveries. He regards himself as a living part of the great machinery of human industries—an essential part. And if the humblest, meanest work is the measure of his gifts, he is contented with his lot. He is the freeman of Christ; and no earthly condition can shackle his spirit or rob him of his birthright. There is not a single slave-thought in his heart. Every service he performs is, above all else, a service unto the Lord. He is not working to please men. The Dollar is not the almighty thing in his eyes. He is in God's service: and all his world-work is but the performance of a duty which God, in His providence, has set before him as the great task of his life. There is true freedom, and true dignity, and true manliness of heart there.

3. And besides—let me throw this out as a third point: the Christian principle puts into a man's heart the elements that lift him clear outside and above the common poverty lines, the pauperism that clings as a curse to our social life. There is no such thing as a lazy Christian, an improvident Christian, a loafing Christian, a tramp Christian—no such thing, in bottom fact, any more than there is a drunken Christian, a vile Christian, a thieving Christian, a Christian of riotous life. As soon as a man becomes a Christian, he becomes diligent in business. fer-

vent in spirit; and, to crown it, he serves the Lord. The bread of beggary never touches his table. He makes honest provision for those who look to him for support. He gives his best thought and his best effort to such work as he can get—lofty or lowly, it matters not, just so he can be true to his manly instincts, and use, to the best, the gifts of God's endowment. He is not hunting for an easy place, or an exalted place, or a high-salaried place: he steps into the first place that will give him a start; and he trusts to his God-blest efforts to insure his merited advancement. There are men by the thousands and tens of thousands, whose lives grandly illustrate this fact.

4. And so, getting back to the text—the underlying thought, “The poor have the Gospel preached to them,” we find the deepest kind of practical philosophy imbedded there. The Gospel makes the poor man self-dependent. It makes him honest, industrious, interested in whatever service he undertakes. It makes him realize that he is a living part of the nation's great productive force. It keeps him off the Bread of Charities, and makes him a respectable and respected member of Church and State. Show me a truly Christian man and I will show you, in him, one who lives a self-dependent life; unless some physical or mental defect has unfitted him for labor duties. And in nine cases out of ten, every such man makes a fair provision for his old age, either by his little economies, or by giving his children such advantages as will enable them to insure his support when the evil days come. The gauge of the Psalmist is a pretty correct one, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” The cases are exceptional.

5. And with such an outcome, what shall be the Church's attitude? Along what lines shall she direct her energies? She should regard it as her primary duty to bring the Gospel to the poor—to fill their hearts and lives

with it. It is her province to do this, first and above all, in order to save their souls: for that is the primary purpose of the Gospel of Christ. But in addition, as a true civic service, by the preaching of the Gospel, she will drive pauperism from our coasts. And if she fails here, it must be because her dignitaries, as Carlyle puts it, are splitting hairs on "prevenient grace," while the poor outcasts are wallowing in grime. The Church must take the Gospel into slum-life in order to obliterate it, and no other instrumentalities will do it. Her service, however, does not stop there—though it stoop there. Other avenues are open to her effort. There are accidents of life; there are distressing providences. Parents die; and little children are left without a home. Children die; and parents are left, in old age, without support. Sickness comes; and there is no money for medical service. The same Gospel which quickens the spirit of self-dependence, quickens, at the same time, the spirit of helpfulness. And so, the Church establishes her orphanages, her old people's homes, her hospitals and infirmaries; so that all those who are in absolute dependence, can have the special care they need, in view of the special want of their lives.

What, then, is your duty and mine? To carry out the purpose of Christ, as indicated in the words of the text, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." We should enter the homes of the lowly who have no church home, and strive to bring them under the power of the Gospel that saves. We should do it, not only through our pastors, our Sunday school workers, the various committees of our several societies; but each one, in a direct, personal way, should try to bring one poor straying soul, impoverished in morals as well as in money—the idle, the dependent, the beggared, the vicious, the vile—under the powerful spell of the Gospel of grace, so that the Spirit of Christ may sanctify their hearts, ennoble their conduct, and make them in civic and social, in moral and religious relations, new creatures in Christ.

We try to preach the pure Gospel from our pulpits—the Gospel that saves, the Gospel that lifts up into nobler planes of life. We have our homes for the care and culture of child-life, our infirmaries for the aged, the crippled, and all others incapable of self-support. It rests with us to go out into the hedges and highways, and persuade people to come to the Gospel Feast. This is the only way to take the poverty out of their hearts—the only process by which we can take poverty out of their homes.

We hear so much, these days, about social betterment. It is a good sign: it marks the awakening of the public conscience. But, let me tell you, all the efforts along that line are but passing make-shifts; they are, at best, but temporary adjuncts; they serve no more than a day's purpose; they do nothing for the heart. They are negative: and while they hold a needed place and have their wholesome effect, they do not last. Nothing is of permanent benefit which does not renew the very source and spring of life: and the whole world of outside service cannot touch it.

Let us see to it, then, that while we may not enter, to any great degree, the moral and social movements of our times, we are doing that which is far more effective—something which Christ demands as our reasonable service, and which our Church sets before us as the fundamental principle in all moral and social uplift. And if the challenge comes to us, "What are you doing to establish your claim to be the pure Church of Christ," may we be able to give the answer that Jesus gave, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." And may that answer take within its broad scope all that pertains to the civil and social, the moral and religious relations of life. It was the way Christ wrought: it is the way His Church will best fill her mission to men.

VI

THE MYSTERIES OF GRACE

Matt. 13:31-33. The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. . . . The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

The Bible is a Book of Mysteries. It bears us into the realm of the infinite; and the infinite abounds in depths which human plumbline cannot reach. People are disposed to reject the divine Word simply because they cannot understand it. They seem to forget that nature is full of mysteries. The food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe: these in themselves, as well as in their use, are mysteries that baffle the sublimest science. And yet, we continue to eat, and drink, and breathe. Everything that God hands down to us has the word "Mystery" stamped upon it. And if the Bible had no mysteries—nay, if it were not a chain of mysteries—we would say that God had not given it. It is the Book of Mysteries, just as the universe is a world of mysteries. And God is their only original source.

The Church, therefore, is an institution of mysteries. And so, it differs from the institutions which men originate. All human arrangements, outside of the Church, are as plain as the multiplication table: they must be logically definite and precise and exact, or men will have nothing to do with them. A business enterprise, a financial scheme, a social compact, must be as plain as a. b. c.: men demand it, or they will not touch it. But if they

are Christian men, they will have nothing to do with a Church that has no mysteries; for mysteries—true mysteries—are the revelation of infinite thought which finite minds cannot comprehend. Let us not take offense, then, at the mysteries of Scripture: they are the badge of God's infinitude.

The 13th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is devoted to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven—parables to illustrate their nature and effect. There are seven mysteries gathered here: I have chosen the 3rd and 4th of these as my text. The beauty of these parables is the simplicity, not only of the thought but of the facts which underlie it. For a parable would carry no weight if it did not deal with the common things of life. The illustration that has to be explained does not illustrate. The word "illustrate" means "to make bright." It is a glass through which we see things as they are. If the glass is cloudy, you will lose the fine points of the picture. If the glass is imperfect, you will get a distorted reflection from it. The parable is like a pair of spectacles: it makes everything clear to your mind's eye. It is like a telescope, which brings distant worlds within the full range of your sight. And so, Jesus spake many parables that we might look into the heavenlies, as well as get a clear vision of the great realities that enter into our own mortal life. And now, let us take these two parables of the text and try to get at the teaching of Christ.

1. The first parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." The people to whom this was spoken would understand all about it. We do not have the mustard plant, as they had it; and so, it may

be well to say a word or two touching its nature. The mustard seed of Palestine was the smallest of berries, while the plant which grew from it was the largest of shrub-beries. It actually grew up and spread out like a tree, from ten to fifteen feet in height. It is therefore one of the miracles of nature. A little black seed, with apparently no life in it: who can imagine the vital force it possesses! A dry, hard, little sphere, not much bigger than the head of a pin: and yet, planted in the earth, with sunshine and shower to nourish it, it springs up into the air like a tree, and the birds lodge in its branches. It is one of the multitude of mysteries that abound on every side—so common that we scarcely give them a passing thought. The vital energy that is stored in everything that grows: we cannot understand it. If you were to take one of these little seeds and cut it to pieces, you could not find its life. Life? What is your life? You know you have it; you know it is everywhere in your physical frame; but what it is or how the blood carries it—the profoundest science knows nothing but the physical processes. And yet, we do not reject the mystery because we cannot understand it. We accept its existence as a fact, because nature is full of it.

And now, Jesus says there is a mysterious force in the kingdom of heaven: but we must plant it. The power of a little seed: the self-developing force that lies within it, and the reproducing force! How accurately it represents the kingdom of heaven, as Christ established it. Let us not speculate as to the kingdom of heaven—what it is—what is embraced in it. The Church is its earthly part: let that suffice. The seed is the Word: the human heart is the place to sow it. And if the heart holds it, the seed will spring into life and bring forth the fruits of grace as surely as the mustard seed grows up and branches out and bears its peculiar fruit. In either case, the mystery is the same. We cannot fathom it. Indeed, to me, the

power of the seed is a greater mystery than the power of the word of Christ. We know that there is a moral force to a moral word; on the same principle, there must be a spiritual force to a spiritual word. And, so, we can understand, in a measure, what Jesus means when He says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

A word—a sound—nothing more: there is no substance to it. A breath playing on the vocal cords: how next to nothing it seems to be! And yet, there is almightiness in it when God utters His voice. A man's word is the man in utterance. If he be true; when he makes a promise, he will perform it. A good man's word, we say, is as good as his note. The whole wealth of the man, the whole power of the man, the whole virtue of the man, lie in his word and blossom in his life. The promise he makes; the task he undertakes; the ideals he tries to realize: his word for it, you can be sure of the result. He keeps within his finite limits. And what of Jesus Christ? He has no finite limits. What saith the Scripture? "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth: for He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." His limits are infinite: He has no limit. He spake: and the withered hand was made whole; the devils came out of the Gadarenes and entered into the swine; the sick, the lame, the halt, were cured of their infirmities; the dead were brought back to life. The word of command was a word of infinite might to do according to His good pleasure. It never failed except when men hardened their hearts: for God will not break the will; He would but move it.

The power of the Word as the seed of life: why are not men everywhere made new creatures in Christ? The parable of the sower explains it. There is the hard heart, and the shallow heart, and the heart preoccupied by pleasures and cares: there are so few hearts that receive and

keep it. The mustard seed will grow no place but in the ground: the Word will take root no place but in the heart. Keep it there; cherish it there; and you will grow in grace, and you will have no spiritual growth without it. The kingdom of heaven will take root on earth only as it is planted in the hearts of men. And that means you and me. It is the Church that scatters the seed of the Word: it rests with us to place ourselves under its influence; and the Word's power—not the power we put into it—not the power we have by nature: the Word's power, as God's instrument of grace, will awaken us from the death of sin and make us alive in Christ.

2. The second parable of the text is even more mysterious than the first one: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Leaven is not so much a substance as a property or quality in substance. It is a subtle something which works through the dough till every particle has been changed into its nature. We can no more see it or touch it, than we can see the sweetness of sugar or touch the savor of salt. And yet, its presence and power are as real as if it had life. It symbolizes the silent influence of the Holy Ghost upon the heart, making men like-minded with Christ.

The kingdom of God does not come with observation: it does not come by violence. And yet, it works mightily and effectively wherever it comes in touch with the human race. The Apostles went everywhere preaching Christ: that was the leaven which subdued empires, wrought righteousness, and brought the nations, one by one, to Jesus' feet. It fulfils the prophetic word, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." And nothing but the leaven of the Gospel will ever make this world what it ought to be. Wars cannot conquer it; laws cannot regulate it; the inner force of nature cannot mould it. The world is set right and kept right only

when the kingdom of heaven has entered as a vital principle and changed the whole heart and life.

It is a peculiar fact that, in the Old Testament, the word "leaven" has an evil sense: it commonly has the same bad sense in New Testament Scripture. But as Christ commended the unjust steward, not because he was wicked, but because he was wise; so He could take this word which commonly symbolizes a mighty evil influence, and make it illustrate the power of the Gospel in the transformation of the human race wherever it comes in contact with human life. There were three evil influences—the leaven of three phases of Jewish life—operative in the time of Christ. There was the leaven of the Pharisees—the hollow formalities of their religious life. There was the leaven of the Sadducees—the cold, critical spirit with which they regarded the Holy Scriptures. There was the leaven of the Herodians—the worldliness which took all the religion out of their life. And this threefold leaven had permeated the whole Jewish people and made them enemies of Christ. It shows the power of evil doctrine, working its way into the Temple, polluting its sacrifices, and making its service of none effect. And as the leaven of hypocrisies and lies was worked into it, God was worked out of it; until, at last, Christ pronounced the doom which they could not escape, "Your house is left unto you desolate."

But the leaven of the kingdom of Christ: what of it? It may be mere accident; but it is quite pertinent: The woman took three measures of meal; and the leaven went through every particle of it. There are three kinds of religious life, of which the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians are the outward type. They are the greatest enemies of Christ. They are the bad leaven working in the hearts of Church people. There is the Pharisee type, the religion of formalities: it dotes on the little outward ceremonies. There is the Sadducee type: it doubts

the mysteries of the Gospel of Christ. It takes the facts of Scripture and converts them into empty figures: it nowhere finds any spiritual realities. There is the Herodian type: it patronizes the Church as Herod did when he built the Temple; it would summon world-force to settle church issues and adopt world measures to meet church wants; it has the brand of the almighty dollar upon it, the brand of world ways upon it, the brand of world wisdom upon it. And there is the danger that these three mighty influences will empty the Church of all true spiritual force, as surely as they turned the ceremonies of the Temple into hollow mockeries. That is what is wrong with the Church these times. Phariseeism, Sadduceeism, Herodianism, up to date, with their evil leaven permeating every particle and part. The Church, therefore, has a mighty task before it: to put the leaven of truth into every heart, so that, little by little, it changes the whole lump of the life: Phariseeism gone, Sadduceeism gone, Herodianism gone, and Christ alone supreme.

At this point the question becomes a personal one. We know that the leaven of wickedness is working in every heart, whether we are in the Church or out of it. As we are in the Church—members of the same—it might be well for us to ask ourselves if the leaven of the Pharisee is working in our natures. Is our Christian life dwindling into a round of formalities? That, perhaps, is our greatest danger—the danger that we prize outward ceremonies more highly than we do inward grace. The leaven of the Sadducees is doing a great deal of harm these times. It is fashionable to distrust the teachings of the Old Testament Scriptures—to doubt alike Word and Sacrament. There are people who have far more faith in themselves than in the Bible: the leaven is a dangerous one; we must shut it out of our hearts. And the Herodian type—how common it is! It gives the Church a world measurement: it would make it a world power by the use of world ap-

pliances. It patronizes the Church with its charities. We surely want to keep that kind of a spirit out of our hearts.

And how shall we do it? The Gospel seed must be there to take root, and grow like a tree, and spread out living branches. The Gospel leaven must be there to change our natures and give us the spirit of Christ. It rests with us to receive the Word into good and honest hearts; for it alone can transform our lives.

VII

IN THE MOUNTAIN: ON THE LAKE

Mat. 14:22, 23. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

The text brings us in touch with Christ's miraculous might. Manifest in the weakness of human nature, He is also manifest in a power that is altogether divine. And it is the union of the human and divine that makes His life such a marvelous one. At one time, the agony of His human soul breaks out in bloody sweat: at another time, the majesty of the Almighty is manifest in word and act, whether He speaks peace to the winds and waves or calms the troubled heart. His natures did not move along separate lines—the divine now acting independently of the human, the human now acting independently of the divine. We do not have a divided Christ. Each nature has its properties; and each operates according to its peculiar properties: but every act is an act of the whole Christ.

We have a dual nature, body and mind: they constitute one person. Thought is of the mind; but the entire person thinks. Act is by the hand; but the entire person acts. In Christ, God and man are one. It is not the human alone that suffers; the entire person suffers: it is not the divine alone that saves; it is the entire person that saves. God in Christ suffers through the human nature: man in Christ saves through the divine nature. Your mind partakes of your physical acts; your body par-

takes of your mental acts. You cannot divide yourself into two parts; neither can you have a divided Christ.

1. I am led to this reflection because the almightiness of Christ has just been manifest in feeding the five thousand: and now He goes up into a mountain apart to pray; and when the evening was come, He was there alone. It was by His divine power that He fed the multitudes: it was according to His human nature that He clambered the mountain-side and in His human need poured out His prayer there. Man cannot feed multitudes, as Christ fed this one: God cannot pray; for to whom would He go with the sacrifice of His lips? And yet man in the unity of the divine nature fed the multitude, and God in the unity of the human nature went step by step to the mountain top and there, at the throne of the Father, poured out the deep desires of His heart. In feeding the multitude, the almightiness of the divine nature was manifest through the Christ, both natures participating in the act; for their union is personal and inseparable. In climbing the mountain and praying there alone, the need of the human nature was manifest in the act; for their union is an inseparable one.

The inseparableness of the two natures in one person: the Church everywhere teaches it; for the Scriptures teach it. The Scriptures teach it, not in dogmatic terms, for the Bible is not a system of doctrine; but by implication in a multitude of instances. The Book of Revelation is like the Book of Nature: it is in an unclassified state. The naturalist goes out into the world of nature and divides everything into three classes—animal, vegetable, and mineral. These he divides and subdivides, till every known element is put into its proper place. The theologian takes up the Bible and he finds three orders of beings—God, angels, and men. He learns their attributes; he discovers their offices; he finds their relations and effects: in short, he constructs a system, the material of which he gathers

from the whole range of the Bible. And among the things that he evolves, there is nothing that is more universally accepted than the union of the two natures, the human and the divine, in the person of Jesus Christ. And this is an inseparable union. To destroy it, would be to destroy the Christ: it would be like separating the soul from the body—the life would be gone.

The inseparableness of the two natures: where the divine is, there the human is also; what the divine does, the human participates in it. Does not Christ say, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"? He is there according to His human nature as well as the divine. We have with us the very same Christ that the disciples had with them—invisible, glorified, it is true; but the same loving, the same sympathizing, the same almighty personality—God and man in Christ. We have in the Holy Supper the entire Christ—not the human nature in heaven, while the divine comes down and imparts itself through the bread and wine; but the whole Christ, the inseparable human-divine one, imparts Himself to us in the Sacrament, so that when He says, "Take, eat; this is My body: take and drink; this is the New Testament in My blood," we know that in a lofty, incomprehensible, sacramental sense, Christ is present and communicated in the fullness of His two natures. What a comfort, what a joy to our hearts, to know that the very Christ who lived our life, who suffered and died and rose again, who ascended into heaven and reigns in glory there: to know that this same Christ is with us to strengthen us by His grace!

2. What a helpless thing is life outside of Christ! These disciples could feed the multitude, with Christ to bless the loaves and fishes: they could do the humanly impossible. But when Jesus sought the mountain solitudes, and they launched their boat on the sea of Galilee, they were powerless against the opposing waves. They

were in their old element, at their old trade; but Jesus was not there, and God was in the storm. No wonder the ship was tossed by the waves.

The absolute dependence of human life! We walk on God's earth; we eat what God puts into it and makes grow out of it; we breathe God's air and see by God's sunlight: the love and goodness and might of God enter into everything that pertains to human existence. Aside from all spiritual sense, He can say to us as Christ said to His disciples, "Without me, ye can do nothing." And yet, while men recognize their physical helplessness; while they are ready to acknowledge, "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season"; while they are ready in bodily extremity to cry as did Peter when the billows were about to sweep over his head, "Lord, save me"; they think that they need no spiritual support; that they are sufficient in themselves and of themselves to work out in their lives every special gift and grace that will fit them for inheritance among the saints in light.

The man outside of Christ is as helpless in spiritual things as were these disciples without Jesus in the boat. They were the sport of the waves, powerless even to reach the shore. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Man possesses no renewing might. He cannot lift himself out of his nature—his fallen spiritual estate—any more than a creature of earth can change its nature. We are sold under sin: it is a spiritual bondage. The Son of God paid the price, and we are free. Our hearts are in a corrupt state: they must be cleansed by the renewing power of the Holy Ghost. We have no spiritual life, no spiritual health, no spiritual strength. We are out upon the sea in the frail boat that we have made, and we cannot row against the driving blast. And if we try to walk on the water, as did Peter, nothing but the stretched-out hand of Jesus can save us.

3. The effect was marvelous here. As soon as Christ entered the ship, the waves ceased: the storm was stayed at His rebuke. And so convincing was the proof of His almighty power, that the disciples came and worshipped Him saying, "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God." It was the argument of fact, and they yielded to it.

It is the only outcome of fellowship with Christ, the only true outcome. If we follow Him from day to day in the ministries of His life, hear His words of grace and truth, see His works of tender love, we must be convinced as were His disciples, and we must confess, "Thou art the Son of God." The deity of Jesus Christ becomes more and more evident to everyone who follows the Gospel account with a teachable heart. It is true, there are traitors like Judas and doubters like Thomas. There are men who rush into discipleship like the young ruler, and then rush out of it. But those who come with a sincere purpose, critical though it be, will find that Christ meets the deep spiritual demands of their nature, and at last they will cast themselves at His feet and acknowledge Him to be Lord to the glory of God the Father.

The proud Pharisee will not confess His name; the learned Scribe will not come to Him for saving grace. The prejudiced man, the self-centered man, the man whose intellect has dwarfed his sensibilities, the man who so magnifies the creature that he loses sight of the Creator, the man who deifies dust and exalts himself as his own Christ: such a man does not receive the Gospel into a good and honest heart, simply because he has no heart for it. The man who takes the Gospel into a dissecting-room and studies it through a microscope: that man gets nothing out of it. The life principle of the Gospel is the living Christ which it puts into the heart: man cannot touch it any more than he can touch the life principle of a plant. Life is too subtle for man-made instruments or mortal eyes.

But the evidences of life abound. We know there is a life principle in an animal: the animal is the proof of it. We know there is a life principle in a plant: the plant is the proof of it. And we know that the life principle of Christ is living and active in human hearts: the Christian life of men, since the days of the apostles, is proof of it. As soon as the spirit of Christ enters into a man's life, so soon he worships Christ. If a man, therefore, does not worship Christ, we know that Christ is not in his heart. The disciples were convinced that Jesus was the Son of God: with that conviction, they worshipped Him.

4. So far, we have dealt largely with principles: the text finds many applications in our lives. A great ministry has its mountain-top retreat where God and the heart commune, with naught but the stars as witnesses. The Lord called to Moses, "Come up unto Me in the mount." And if we would fulfil our mission in life, we must get far above earthly levels of thought and act, and commune with Him in the deepest solitudes of the soul.

Every life must have its holy hours. Jesus prayed in secret away from earthly sights and sounds—Himself and God alone. The beauty, the sublimity of it! We must have the same. We have the Lord's day, a mountain-top of privilege: and God is there. But the Lord's day is a holy day only as we use it for holy purposes. And it can be given to holy purposes only as we live a constant holy life. We cannot schedule time: this day for sharp practice, that day to spend its profits in debaucheries, and so on till Sunday comes, and then label it, "Holiness unto the Lord." The only man who uses Sunday aright is the man who uses every day of the week aright. It takes six days of holy living to fill the seventh with holiness of life.

The prayer of Christ was one of fellowship and love: it was blessed communion with the Father who sent Him. We have narrowed prayer to a beggar's call for help.

And if help comes, we forget to pray till we need help again. That is the lowest possible conception of a prayerful life. "Commune with God in thine own heart." Like Enoch, we should walk with God till God takes us. We need the spirit of David, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: my meditation of Him shall be sweet."

It was night: and Jesus was on the mountain-top alone. What lonely hours He must have spent! The joy of His heart was joy in the Lord: even His disciples could not partake of it. The world is full of people: how many are you willing to make heart companions of your life? And as you rise in intelligence, in heavenly thought, in holy impulse and act, the more you find yourself alone. Five thousand crowded around Christ for the loaves and fishes; but for pure fellowship, one that was altogether divine, He climbed the mountain alone: and the Father met Him there.

The disciples, with Christ in their midst, could distribute bread to multitudes; without Him, they could not manage one little boat. The larger deed was a success because Jesus was there to bless the bread and break it. The smaller was a failure because Jesus was on the mountain and they were alone. The man who does not have Jesus as a partner-in-trade, fails at the essential point. He may ply the oars with all his might; the boat may bound upon the waves; but he cannot reach the shore: he cannot reach the haven of eternal rest and peace. The only way to save the disciples was to work a miracle. Is not every saved soul a miracle of grace? The Incarnation, the Resurrection, the coming of the Holy Ghost: each is a miracle. We are out upon the sea of life; the storm is driving us into the gates of death; Jesus sees us from the mountain-top of the skies, and He comes down to save. He enters the boat—our poor life; He speaks His "Peace, be still," to our trembling hearts, and there is a great calm. What other can we do than call Him

divine and worship Him! Miracle upon miracle marks the workings of His saving might.

As He drew near, they said, "It is a spirit!" And they were filled with fear. How men tremble at the thought of the presence of a spirit! They sin against God; they despise Him; they neglect His worship; they profane His name: but God is a spirit, ever present! "Thou God seest me": they know the fact. They are afraid of all kinds of imaginary spirits; but the fear of the Lord is not before their eyes.

One more thought. Peter had said, "Lord, if it be Thou!" "If"—that wretched word of doubt! No wonder he began to sink! "If" is the word with which the devil tempted Christ in the desert. How different their confession with Christ in the boat! There they worshipped Him and said, "Of a truth, Thou art the Son of God." Heaven forbid that the word "If" should ever enter into the creed of our hearts. May we the rather be able, by God's grace, to lay our hand upon the whole Revelation of God in Christ and say, "This is most certainly true!"

VIII

THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

Matt. 18:1-4. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

A man's questions are often his best measure: they are the self-revelation of his mind and heart. A divine Teacher in daily fellowship with His disciples: what sublime heights where they might sit and see His face, and learn of life and peace and joy to come! The privilege of tuition under such a Teacher's care: what glorious results there should be in the lives of those who are blest by it!

The hold of human nature on man's purest purpose and noblest effort: it commonly strives for the mastery; it commonly secures it. It will rise up and take the reins and rule. And of all the sad instances in the life of Christ, none is more sad along that line than the scene of the text, when the disciples come to Jesus with a little question of place. "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The miserable self-seeking, the mean self-pride that could suggest such a thought! Imagine a man admitted into the presence of the crowned heads of Europe—rank, culture, art, on every side; and he should be puffed up and almost burst with pride at his own importance. Imagine a man entering a Hall of Fame; and as he stands in the midst of the statues of the great men of all ages, he rises above them all in his own eyes—him-

self but a cypher in the number of the world's good and great. The case in hand outclasses it.

1. "The Kingdom of Heaven!" God on the throne, angels and arch-angels and the spirits of the just made perfect ranged in glory there: the scene transcends the loftiest range of human thought! And as we enter, shall we claim a place, the one on the right hand and the other on the left of Him who rules the universe? We, dust and ashes, saved by grace: shall we not prostrate ourselves and cry in humble tone, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Thy name be all the praise."

"The Greatest!" Shall not our hearts leap with joy at the thought that we may have even the least place in "The Kingdom of Heaven": willing, like the prodigal son, to take the humblest servant's part! As you stand before some mighty waterfall that breaks in very thunder-tone at your feet; as your eye leaps from crag to crag till the towering mountain penetrates the clouds and you are overawed at its vastness, you do not think of the large place you fill in this universe: your soul is hushed into silence, and tremblingly you whisper in the deepest recesses of your heart, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches!" And as a man gets a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven—its glory, a glory that exceeds our sublimest thought—shall he begin to speculate as to the bigness of the place he shall fill there? The greatness of the kingdom is not measured by the littleness of the man who enters it: it is great before he gets there. A drop in the ocean, a grain of sand on the seashore: these more than measure a man in the infinitude of that kingdom where God reigns supreme.

It is more than a little fact of history, this question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" It is a fact of life—a fact as real today as it was in the time of Christ: a fact, therefore, of human nature, the best as

well as the worst. And we must realize our living relation to it. We have a very nice way of dividing and subdividing the great events of this world-age and studying them like a map—something altogether outside of ourselves. Let us not forget that we are a living part, vitally connected with its very center. Time and space do not count here: a great world-fact belongs to all time and every place. Upwards of seven hundred years before Christ, the Prophet could say, "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities." And we can look back two thousand years and say the same. We must realize that we nailed Him to the accursed Tree, before we take refuge in His bleeding side. The whole act must be very personal and very present: only then shall we get away from such vain and selfish questions as to who shall be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. It is the direct, personal, responsible touch that we must get, if we would be moved aright. If I can build up nineteen centuries between myself and the Cross of Christ, the weight of responsibility will rest very lightly upon my heart. But when I find myself driving the nails through His hands and feet, and thrusting the spear into His side, I am overwhelmed at the enormity of my act and I prostrate myself before Him and plead His bleeding love. The love of Christ: how infinite its measure! For His prayer from the Cross is as vital today as when He uttered it, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The appeal of the Crucified One, as we have it in verse, should stir the very depths of our heart:

"O, men and women, your deeds of shame,
Your sins without reason and number and name:
I bear them here on the Cross on high;
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

2. "The Kingdom of Heaven." Who is the greatest in it? Who, after dwelling on the lines given above? Surely, no one would claim it who is of a broken and

contrite heart. But what of those self-seeking disciples? How shall Jesus teach them their place: how humble them into their place? It takes omnipotence to meet the little things of life as well as the large ones: and the infinite wisdom of the Master is here made manifest. And so He called a little child unto Him and set it in the midst. And He said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." What a thrust at their presumption and their pride! The great question is not, What place shall we hold in heaven? but, How shall we get there? The man who came running to Jesus and asked, "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" had a broader vision than these disciples; but he lacked the consecration to follow up his view with saving effect. We must not only look at Christ's redeeming work from the outside and find no more than an outward relation to it: we must find that soul-hunger and soul-thirst that drive us to His table and fill us with the fullness of His rich supplies of grace. The answer, therefore, goes right to the very core. Our great concern should be to get into the kingdom—that above all else. To have our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, to be partakers of His grace, to sit with Christ Jesus in heavenly places: what greater longing could fill our hearts and inspire our lives! And if we would center our thought upon these eternal certitudes, there would be no room for ambitious desires, no moral possibility of indulging in baseless and unbridled reveries.

There is so much in the life of Christ to inspire a reverent awe. As He stands in the ship and says to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still"; as He faces the fierce demoniac and, with a word, drives out the evil spirit; as He bows before the tomb of Lazarus and calls him back to life: in each case, there is an over-awing majesty which puts a hush upon the human spirit and makes it feel that it is but dust and ashes in the divine presence. But when

the soul is sore distressed; when the cold world has chilled our hearts and every life-aim and life-effort have fallen to pieces; when we have striven to reach some lofty heights, and all at once an insurmountable rock looms up before our eyes, or an impassable gulf opens at our feet—and who of us has not had such experiences: to hear that sweet Saviour-voice, as He draws a little child to His gentle embrace, speaking comfort and courage: Let no false ambition rule your life; be gentle, be trustful, as one of these little ones; “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid!” it is then that with the sweet simplicity of a child we give ourselves over to His tender care. Such is the vision we should get when conflicting emotions disturb our spirits, whether they exalt us above measure or, by their depressing effect, put us altogether out of heart.

I know nothing more sublime than this scene—nothing that can so calm our striving, struggling spirits. It gives us a view of the Church as it should be, the Church as we should help to make it. We should expect that the Church, founded, as it was, by Him who was lowly in heart, would be the last place where men would scramble for the higher seats. The very opposite is a common occurrence. They covet offices that will add a dignity and a grandeur to their name—offices that keep them before the public eye. It is so different from what Jesus would have it. A little child, scarcely looking up, abashed at His presence; a little child, the sweet innocence and wonderment with which it gazes upon those around it; a little child—no proud self-seeking in its little breast, no looking for applause, a simple surprise, a simple delight—that measures it: what an object lesson to set before these ambitious disciples! There is a proportion between the greatness of the kingdom and the simplicity of him who enters it. The truly great men in all ages—warriors, statesmen, scholars, artists—have as a rule been modest and retiring in their nature. And as the kingdom of

heaven is the greatest of all kingdoms; so those who enter it should be marked by humbleness of heart and life. And have we not the noblest example of this in Christ! He took upon Himself the form of a servant; He humbled Himself; in His mouth was no guile. And do we not love to think of Him as the meek and lowly one? Why, then, shall we suffer pride to rule our heart? Let us rather go softly all our days in meekness of spirit.

3. We now come to the application as Jesus makes it: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." To be great in goodness, to be great in gentleness, to be great in forbearance, to be great in Christian love, to be great in all the graces of the Spirit: that should be the ambition of every follower of Christ. Great in the kingdom—a greatness signalized by humble service as well as in unassuming effort that the knowledge of the Gospel may increase: such greatness should be the holy aspiration of every converted life. A converted life—the very mention of it suggests some wholesome contrast: it is a life turned about the very opposite it was before—a life turned from haughtiness to humbleness, from self-seeking to self-sacrificing, from crowding into higher places to coming down to help and serve.

And, so in the noblest Christian sense, we can all be great. The greatness of goodness is within the reach of the humblest person who hears my voice. The graces of the Spirit—meekness, gentleness, love: it does not take scholarship to practice these; it does not take gold or genius or keen insight. The only requirement is a converted heart—one renewed by the Spirit, and endowed by the Spirit with the heavenly gift and grace. And what a power the Church would be if its members were gifted with a readiness to render lowly service—leading a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, seeking opportunities to bring comfort and encouragement and

support to those whose backs are almost broken by the burden they must daily bear and whose hearts are all but crushed by the troubles and sorrows and disappointments that are incident to our common mortal life! The service of such lives would be a blessed one because of its direct and indirect results: direct in the case of those who would receive its immediate benefit; indirect in view of its influence upon the community life.

But such a life, like the life of a little child, is not a studied one: it is spontaneous. The child is sweetly unconscious of its simplicities: therein the beauty lies. And the pure in heart will be pure in life: there will be an unintentional, unplanned outflow of action from the pure impulse of the renewed nature. The trouble is, we lack the simplicity of the child-life. As soon as we do something commendable, the old sinful nature rises up and demands its meed of praise: in fact, it seems quite impossible for us, in our sinful estate, to do an absolutely unselfish act. And even where we may not be conscious of it, we must pray as did the Psalmist, "Lord, cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

The simple confidence of the child: if only we possessed it! What worriments and annoyances and doubts and fears it would eliminate from our lives. We should have the assurance of the prophet, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." We should rise to those sublime heights to which Abraham rose when the Lord took him out to number the stars and gave the promise, "So shall thy seed be." And Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. He walked by faith and not by sight.

The simple confidence of the child: why should we not have it? The promise is, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And shall we not believe it? The child-like spirit prompts it: shall we trust God less than a little

child trusts its parent? The simple trust is a strong trust. Every man of strong faith has been a man of simple trust: there is a perfect balancing here. Weaken one side or the other, and like a wall out of plumb, if the equilibrium is lost, it will fall to pieces.

Let us not strive to be great in the kingdom of heaven, as the disciples interpreted it; but let us strive to be faithful to every duty, the small as well as the great. And like the little child which clings the closer to its parent when danger is near, let us nestle the closer to the great Father-heart of our God till these calamities of life be overpast.

IX

LIFE: AND HOW TO LIVE IT

Matt. 19:16-22. And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

The text presents difficulties which I shall not attempt to solve: it would require a long doctrinal discussion to do it. I have chosen these verses because they have a direct practical bearing upon our lives. It is not so much its doctrinal as its practical features that I wish to emphasize. It is true, there must be a doctrinal basis to every practical inference: and we dare not ignore the fact. But "Life and How to Live it" is my uppermost thought—the structure of life upon the foundation of a sound doctrine.

The young man who came to Christ was very much concerned about eternal life—how to enter it. He calls Him "Good Master." And Jesus seems to rebuke him for it; He says, "Why do you call me good? God is the only good one." There must be a sufficient reason for such a retort. As if He said, "God is the only good one: do you call me good in that sense? Do you look upon me as a mere man, and yet apply to me a name that

belongs to God alone? Is this an acknowledgement that I, too, am divine?" There no doubt was some deep, heart-searching thought: though that may not have been it. Jesus would send the arrow home, and then turn to the honest question that was troubling this young man's conscience. And so He says, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And right here let us find our starting-point.

1. The idea of life, and entrance into it: what is life? How secure it? Life: the plant has life—unconscious life we call it. The young man, surely, had a higher conception of life. We do not want to bind ourselves down to a mere vital principle, whose only power or capacity is to draw nourishment from the soil. Life is more than the unconscious absorption of mineral substance and the development which results from it. Life: the animal has life—self-conscious, world-conscious life, we call it. The life that knows the world about it and chooses that which is best adapted to its nature and which it acquires by instinct: we would not be satisfied with a life that is common to birds and beasts. A life that knows nothing outside of its own nature and its own wants; a life whose thought is limited to the things that nourish it, or the things that may endanger it—a concrete life: we surely have aspirations away beyond it. Life as man has it in his native estate; a life planning, toiling, saving, consuming; a life struggling, fighting, killing, acquiring; a life with its mere moral aspects and no great eternal outcome: we surely would not be satisfied with such a life.

This young man was not satisfied with it. He had an honest heart; he kept the outward commandment; but he had no rest, no peace. He felt there was something about life which he did not have. He hungered for it; he thirsted after it; and the more he tried to get it, the farther he seemed from it. It was a terrible soul struggle. No wonder he came running to Christ, cast himself

at His feet, and cried in agony of spirit, "Good Master, what must I do that I may enter into eternal life?" He had an unbounded desire; but his grasp was weak and faint.

"God" and "Good": the words are one; one in origin, one in essence. There is no good outside of God; and if we have God, we have good in boundless measure. If we can say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance," then we have the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come: then we have God and Good in one. And any good outside of God is not good in essence. It is artificial; and that which is artificial has no life. That was the trouble in this case. The life of this young ruler lacked the divine element: the breath of life had not reached it. The eternal quality was not there and he realized the lack of it. His heart was empty. He was a ruler; but honors could not fill it. He was rich; but money could not fill it. He had splendid moral qualities; but morals could not fill it. These were but empty baubles—brilliant, but lacking substance. There is no good thing unless God is in it. Fill the heart with world treasures; and it will be empty if God is not there. But if God is in the heart, though every earthly treasure be lost, there will be rest and comfort and peace.

2. And that suggests the thought of the insufficiency of human standards in world interests and activities. The young man asked, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" And Jesus gave the answer that suited his particular case—one that would call out the qualities of his heart. It was the answer of the Law, "This do, and thou shalt live." But a man cannot keep the Law in essence and spirit. It was this fact which led St. Paul to say, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." In his perfect estate, man needed no out-

ward law: the law of his heart was his all-sufficient guide. In his fallen estate, man needed the outward law, its guidance as well as its restraints. The law, however, has but an outward force upon the natural life: it has no life; it cannot give life. The keeping of the law, therefore, cannot give spiritual life: it is the Gospel alone that is spirit and life.

And so, the Law has its limits. The sword can kill but it cannot make alive. The State can regulate the outward conduct, but it cannot quicken the inward parts. And that marks the dividing line between community moral service and Church moral service. Community moral service has the Law back of it, and would be powerless without it. At most, it makes men outwardly good by restraints. And therein all its value lies. It may shut up the drinking-house; but it cannot quarantine the thirst. It may close every resort that ministers to the animal appetite; but it cannot put purity into the heart. In blocking the way to positive evil, it may do a great negative good: it may even enable men to put their hands on each commandment and say, "All this have I kept." But there will still be a great soul want—an eternal one; and no community service can supply it.

It is here where the Church's moral service performs its part. It does not work from the outside: it works on the heart and through the heart out into the life. There must be more than the Gospel in the pulpit; there must be the Gospel in the people; there must be holy lives to reproduce in others holiness of life. And right here is a sad fact which we dare not ignore. Just as the State fails, through its appointed agencies, to curb the immoralities that are dissipating the energies and demoralizing the lives of our people—young and old alike; so the Church, through its appointed agencies, has not risen up to the demands which rest upon her in the safeguarding and the right-shaping of the common moral life. The Church

does too little service outside of the pulpit. It provides for young life on Sunday and lets it run riot, if it pleases, the rest of the week. It lacks rallying-point. Street influence, work influence: it has so little regulating influence on everyday life that it rarely touches these as a great living force.

And yet, we must be careful not to topple over to the other side: we must not lose sight of the fact that the outward regulation of the life does nothing toward the renewal of the heart. That was the trouble here. The rich young ruler was outwardly perfect—as human perfection goes. He had not broken a single commandment in outward act. Imagine a city composed of men who could make a like boast—every commandment kept by every man in it! Would you have it—and nothing more? A house swept and garnished, with nothing in it—neither dirt nor dust: is that a home? A field without bramble or briar, not a root or fibre or twig of any sort, as clean as the sands of the desert: is that a paradise? A clean house, a clean field, a clean life—and nothing more: the utter emptiness of the negative! A cypher, with not a figure to give it value; a minus sign, with nothing before or after it: such was the condition of that young man's heart. It was clean; but there was no eternal element within it. And such is the nature of all morals outside of Christ.

Where, then, shall we align ourselves? on both sides! We are citizens; as such we have civic duties. These duties are not met by going to church and taking part in the service: they are met by working, as Christian citizens, for clean government and clean life. And moral service in the Church: how shall we do our part there? First, by the faithful performance of all our church duties; and then, by leading others into the communion of saints and encouraging them in their Christian life. We must meet each one according to his peculiar wants. Has he a bad

habit? we must help him to correct it. Does he seem indifferent to his church privileges? We must try to quicken in him a new interest. Is he out of work or does he suffer want? We should help him to get employment and make it our business to see that he has bread to eat. There are a multitude of ways in which we can show that we have a heart for men in their perplexities and distresses.

3. The sad part about this young man was that he did not know his own heart. He thought he knew it; but he was woefully mistaken. And so, when Jesus repeated the Commandments, with that notable summary of the second Table, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," he said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" The outward law he no doubt had kept; and in that fact he took just pride. But in spite of it, he realized that it did not reach out into eternal life. And the lack of it, the loss of it, worried his soul. What was the trouble? The man had deceived his own heart. The question was, How to set him right!

When he said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," Jesus might have denied it. Truth between man and man: words cannot settle it. An appeal to those present would do no good: they might have taken his side. Besides, the man had an honest conviction and he would stick to it: Jesus' word was but a human voice—it would have no special value in men's eyes. The only way to settle the dispute was by an outward test. The question, "What lack I yet?" gave the opportunity to make it. It would show the defect and the consciousness of it. Aye, the very question proved that he was conscious of some defect. Jesus said, "If thou wilt be perfect"—that is, if thou wilt cover thy defect—"go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me." We must not forget those other words, "Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself." If we would fulfill that commandment, must we share with our neighbor whatever we have? If we have two coats, must we give him one? If we have two houses, must we give him one? If we have two dollars, must we give him one? That would be socialism pure and simple. Is that what Jesus teaches here? He isn't teaching socialism or anything else along government lines. The man had made a boast: Jesus knew that it was false. How shall He prove His point and make the man see it? He puts him to the test. And the fact that the man turned back with a sorrowful heart, shows that he could not stand the test and that he was conscious of it. It was not a rule of life, therefore, but the test for this particular man's life.

Do I love my neighbor as I love my life? I must confess that I have not done it and that I cannot do it. Therefore I am not perfect. And therefore, on that basis, I cannot enter into life. It was the recognition of this fact that led St. Paul to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Had he stopped there, he would have been lost. But he did not stop there: he fixed his eyes upon the Cross, upon Him who suffered there in his place; and this was his triumphant shout, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Perfect? Yes, perfect in Christ. Perfect? Yes, perfect through the merit of Christ. That is your perfection and mine. The outward form of the law: we can keep it. The spirit of the law: it is impossible to keep it. These outward commandments recorded here: by God's grace we can keep every one—we must do it. But when it comes to the intents of the heart, the world and the flesh and the devil assailing us on every side: we cannot bar our hearts against their entrance. The hands, the tongue, the feet, these we can bridle and shackle; but thought and impulse and desire: how can we drive them

out of our hearts and keep them from coming back with increased force!

There is in nature the law of compensation. Every creature has its special defect; but the God of nature has given it something to offset it. The animal that is timid is fleet; the animal that cannot protect its life can hide. For every seeming physical defect there is a corresponding something that fully compensates for it. "One thing thou lackest yet." It is eternal life and the gift to gain it. But there is a divine law of compensation: the God of all grace has made it. "He that believeth on the Son hath life." Jesus compensates for every defect of our spiritual nature: we are perfect in Him; we are perfect through Him. "What lack I yet?" Nothing—absolutely nothing! For "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me." What a blessed estate!

X

PROMISE AND PRACTICE

Matt. 21:28-32. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, the first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

The Scripture everywhere make it evident that God is no respecter of persons: He treats all alike. If there is a difference in His attitude, the fault lies in man's attitude. The complaint has gone up more than once: you and I have made it in our hearts, "God's ways are not equal." But God has declared by the mouth of His prophet that the complaint is not just: and that ought to settle it for all time. When He utters His voice, the earth melts: who can stand before His presence? No one can look upon God and live.

In the parable of the text, there are two sons—children of the same father—each the object of his love. The one professes obedience; but he does not perform it: the other performs obedience; but he does not profess it. They were both at fault. The one started wrong; but he ended right: the other started right; but he ended wrong. The mixture, in either case, was a bad one. It is, indeed, better to start wrong and end right than to reverse it: it is best, however, to start right and stay right. But there was no

third son. There were only the two; and both of them were bad at some point of their life.

The Parable of the Two Sons is a very plain one. As soon as you read it, you get all there is in it. And that is what makes it so difficult a text. If there were something subtle about it, something mysterious about it, we might spend the hour in bringing its deep, mysterious thought into the light. But parables, in their very nature, are plain statements of possible facts; and their teaching lies on the surface. It remains for us, then, to bring them from their far-off age and their far-away clime, and make them fit our age and clime. If we fail there, the whole thing is a failure.

1. "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went." The disobedient one becomes obedient. He does not make an excuse: he bluntly, rebelliously says, "I will not do it." And here is the remarkable fact: The father does not coax him, nor scold him, nor try to drive him: he does not even ask him a second time. The whole incident closes right there.

It closes: yet it does not close. It is the case of a wayward, self-willed child; but a child, none the less. And the child-heart is there though the child-life be a wayward one. The father's voice, the father's appeal, the father's disappointment, are branded upon his memory: and the longer he thinks about it, the deeper it burns into his heart. At last, he repents! He repents: what a wonderful word is that word "Repent!" Its original sense is, "after-thought," "after-care." And all true after-thought and after-care, in its self-development, becomes an after-change. The change of thought, if it is deep and honest and sincere, produces a change in act. And that is just what happened here. The son repented: and he went! The disobedient one becomes obedient.

2. "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the second and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not." The obedient one becomes disobedient. He is polite. We can almost see him bow and smile and cheerfully offer his service, as if it were the chiefest joy of his life to obey his father's voice. And now as to the fact. The only service he rendered was a lip service: he lacked truth in the inward parts. If we give him the benefit of the doubt and suppose that he was sincere for the moment, it was like the seed in the shallow soil, which quickly springs up and bids fair to yield a bountiful harvest, but soon withers and dies, and there is no fruitage.

It does not say here that this second son changed his mind: and that is what justifies the damaging inference. His mind, it is just to conclude, remained the same. He had no intention to keep his promise. He was a hypocrite, fair in speech but false in heart and life. Like all hypocrites, the words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart—war against his father's wishes, war against his father's interests, war against his father's love. He was courteous to the outward eye: he was callous and conscienceless back of the outward guise. There is no heart quite as hard as the heart of the hypocrite. He constantly steels himself against every noble sentiment, every manly impulse: and he becomes the bolder and the more brazen in his attitude. His profession becomes the more pronounced as his hypocrisies increase. He goes from bad to worse, until he reaches the stage where there is no room for repentance. The Book of Job gives the right estimate: "The triumphing of the wicked is short: the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment."

3. And who, according to the text, are these two sons? The one typifies the publicans and harlots—the unscrupulous life, the sensuous life: the other, the chief priests and elders of the people—the self-righteous life, the life of

cold religious formalities. It is an actual fact that Jesus found an easier approach to the hearts of those who followed their wayward, wanton lusts, than those who entrenched themselves in their ceremonial rites and made themselves believe that outward observance was a substitute for inner obedience. The former had a voluptuous heart; the latter had a self-satisfied, self-sufficient heart. In the sight of God, both were sadly defective; for self-righteousness is as great an offense in His eyes as unrighteousness: neither has the least particle of saving grace.

And here is the chief difference, in substance. The unrighteous man is conscious of the condemnation that rests upon his unrighteous acts. There are times when he loathes his sin and utterly abhors it. There are times when his soul cries out against it and he longs for a better life. But the hypocrite is proud of his hypocrisies. He sets his little religious formalities as the goal of a truly religious life. He is actually heathenish in his conception of the religious principle. To the heathen, there is no connection between a religious life and a moral life: they have no meeting-place in the same heart. The heathen has his gods of lust and gods of murder and gods of theft—gods for every conceivable crime. He thus treats religion and morals as absolutely distinct. The hypocrite does the same. He performs his religious duties, the set ceremonials he has been taught; but he does not think, for a moment, that it implies any moral obligation on his part. And so he moves on, a gross sinner in his moral life; but a strict and consistent formalist in his religious life.

4. And now, let us leave these two sons, each with his own faults; and let us find the underlying principle of the parable. The call came to both alike. They were both children of the same home. They were both the objects of the same paternal love. The moral plane was

one and the same. And what does all this suggest? It suggests the tremendous possibilities of human life. It suggests the startling fact that a man has the power to withstand God's blessed decree. Here are two sons, alike in their father's love, alike in their father's purpose. And yet, the one deliberately disobeys his father's voice and the other penitently fulfills his father's desire. The father's attitude is absolutely the same—the same in thought, the same in act.

The call of God to the individual heart; the call of God to two sons of the same home! What do we find? The one rejects it; the other responds to it. What makes the difference? When God created the world, He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. He was dealing with matter that had no inherent power of resistance. But when He comes to men, He deals with creatures which He has made in His own image: creatures with a will which He has made free. In short, God made man a self-determining agent; and He will not do violence to a principle of man's nature which He himself has planted in it. He will not break man's will: He would bend it. And so He stretches out His hands in tender appeal, "Turn ye; turn ye; for why will ye die!" Think of man's might. A will so stubborn, so strong, that it can resist God's power to change it! It is the might of the natural heart. And it is so commonly manifest! There are men whom the least temptation can draw aside: so weak are they in their moral nature. But so sin-set, sin-craving, sin-crazed, are their hearts, that they cannot be moved by the power of the Holy Ghost. And that is why world influences control the vast majority of the human race, while church influences get so little hold upon men's lives. And we ministers would be justified in making the same charge as Stephen made, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost."

5. The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before the scribes and rulers of the people, not because of what they are but in spite of it. It is an actual fact that a riotous life is more easily brought to repentance than a self-righteous life: a prostitute is a better subject for saving grace than a purist. The former, sick of sin, and loathing it, yields to the call of grace: the latter, in self-sufficiency and pride, sets up a stubborn resistance against it. It is not God who makes the difference: man does it. The same principle is operative here as was operative in the case of bodily cure. Along with the command of Christ went the power of Christ to make it effective. And when the call went forth, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," along with the call to believe went the power to believe. And the power to believe will be communicated, unless men wilfully resist it. The power to resist the Holy Ghost is one of the plainest teachings of Scripture.

In the case of the scribes and rulers of the people to whom Jesus points this parable, He shows their attitude and its effect. John came in the way of righteousness: he taught the truth and lived it. But they cut themselves off from it; they would not listen to it; they refused to believe it. They would not harbor the truth long enough to let it take root. The publicans and harlots acted the very opposite, and with opposite results. If I give you a seed, and you do not plant it, it will not spring into life. If I give you a truth and you do not receive it into your heart, it will die. It is this that makes the difference between these two sons. They both heard the same request: the one cast it aside; the other listened to it and cherished it. The one failed to obey his father's voice: he forgot all about it. The other pondered over his father's appeal: he was sorry that he had despised it; and he turned with all his heart and cheerfully responded to it.

And so, two people may go to church—outwardly the same. The one, righteous in his own eyes, goes exactly through all the church formalities—singing like a seraph and praying like a saint. And yet, he may take nothing to his heart: the renewing power does not reach it. The other, utterly lacking in churchly spirit, or disobedient to it, may get a message that sets the sting to his conscience and gives him no peace till he finds peace in Christ. What makes the difference? The Love of God is the same in each case: the merit of Christ is the same in each case: the power of the Holy Ghost is the same in each case. Why, then, are the results not the same? It is the fact of faith that makes the difference. And that faith is not a thing of natural development: it is wrought by the indwelling might of the Holy Ghost. We teach our children aright. We have them learn by heart, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me by His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith.” And so, faith is the gift of God: God works faith wherever men do not wilfully cast the truth from their hearts or bar the truth out of their hearts.

There were only two sons; and one or the other represents you and me. When the call came to us, we were either cold, formal, self-sufficient moralists; or we were careless, indifferent creatures, following the moment’s impulse. Let the dead past bury its dead: the great question is, what are we now? What is our place in the kingdom of Christ? We can be hypocritical there: we can be voluptuous there: we can be careless there. I sometimes fear that the bad qualities of both these sons cling to our natures. At times, it may be the one; at times, the other; at times, both at once. Like skilled actors, we can play three leading parts in the moral performance. And now, in sober sense, what shall we do?

Let us Repent: let us get the "after-thought" that changes our attitude. And let us believe: let the truth abide in our hearts; let us turn it over there; and let us cherish it there, till it works the renovation of our lives. Then we shall be free from all hypocrisies; we shall be free, too, from the libertine spirit that so readily enters and so easily controls our hearts. We shall lose the bad points of both these sons: we shall gain their good points. And then, conscience within us, and our God above us, shall approve of our character as well as of our conduct.

XI

THE RESOURCES OF FAITH

Mark 2:1-5. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the Word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

The things that break the monotony of life are milestones to mark its leading events. If you look back over the past, you will find great memory-points around which cluster the things in which you have an unfading interest. They are the pivots of your little lifetime.

We have come, in our text, to one of the great central incidents in the life of Christ. And what was not great when He touched it! Let us set the scene in our midst: let us fix our own natural eyes upon it. Here is a palsied man: poor creature, how is he to get to Christ? How reach the Master's feet? He is helpless: he cannot take a single step. But he has friends; and they carry him to the house where Jesus is preaching to the people. Having reached the place, a new difficulty arises: the doorway is thronged; they cannot get near it. So they mount to the roof: they tear up the tilings: and they lower the man into the presence of Christ. They were bound to get there: they would not be thwarted in their purpose. The method was not a common one; but it was effective: it brought results. The emergency was an unexpected one;

so they adopted an extraordinary way of meeting it. We surely can learn some useful lessons from this unusual scene.

1. The man who wants to get into the presence of Christ can do it. There may be obstacles; but he can surmount every one of them. Zacchæus did; though he had to climb a tree to do it. And the man who does not want to get there, can find a multitude of excuses. And the worst of it is, he actually believes they are true. It is the old principle that where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. And out of that principle grows this fact: Where the heart is set, there the whole man will be. It is the unerring law of human life.

To be personal and specific: If your heart is not at one with Christ, you will find a thousand reasons to keep you away from the Church of Christ. It is not the Church's fault any more than it is Christ's fault. Every man who does not want to go to church, blames the Church for it: it's the minister, or the people, or the music, or the service. And all the time, the fault lies in his own heart. "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside." Let me tell you: if the spirit of Christ is in your heart, nothing can keep you from the place where prayer is wont to be made. The earnest man always reaches the place for which he starts. And if you are in earnest about getting to church, as you are about the business interests and social engagements that take up so much room in your hearts, nothing can keep you from crowding your way into God's House. The vile man hunts out vile places; the lazy man hunts out loafing places; the ambitious man hunts out higher places, and the man of Christ will hunt out the place where Christ has recorded His name. As soon as I know that a man does not go to Church, I know that the love of Christ is not in his heart. And if he denies Christ by despising His Church, Christ will deny him before His Father in heaven. A godless life here means a godless life forevermore.

2. And why do men seek Christ? Herod the Great sought Him to take His life: the Scribes and Pharisees did the same. These people crowded about the door and shut it against everyone else. The novelty of the case, no doubt, drew some there. Some followed Him in sheer astonishment at His miracles: others, because they got a share of the loaves and fishes. And there were those who went with the multitude: they belonged to that large class who go where the crowd goes. And there were those who sat at His feet to learn the way of life: those, too, like this poor palsied man, who sought Christ's healing touch.

Jesus meets each man according to the longing of his heart—the wish, the purpose, the aspiration there. Herod wanted to see a miracle; but Jesus scorned him: He knew the foxy nature of the man's heart. Nicodemus came and wanted to be taught: Jesus sat down and told him the wonderful mysteries of the kingdom of grace. There are people who go to church as a pastime: that is about all they get out of it. There are those who read the Bible to pervert it: they but harden their hearts. And there are those who love the courts of God's House: they go there for prayer and praise; and their souls are blest. If you and I come here to get at the feet of Jesus and worship Him in the Unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, He will speak the peace that passeth knowledge. But we must be in earnest about it—as earnest as were those men who tore up the roof and lowered the palsied man into His presence. They did the unusual thing—not to be eccentric, but because it was the only way to reach Christ. There is a broad difference here; and we should recognize it. There are Churches that are forever adopting oddities to catch the floating masses. The method merits nothing but severest censure. Do not enter the house of God by the way of the roof, when the door is wide open with a welcome. But if there is no other

way, do the odd thing—the grotesque thing, if need be, and Christ will bless your effort. There are certain church formalities from which we must not depart, unless circumstances absolutely demand it. But if the circumstance comes, let us meet it in heroic measure, even if we must do a thing as unusual as did these men when they tore up the roof and let down the man before Christ. It is not the novelty: it is the necessity that must decide the case. And Jesus takes account of the difference.

3. The next point I wish to emphasize is this: Christ is in His Church as truly as He was in that house. And He is there with every healing gift and grace. He is there to be reached by the door which He has made—the door of Word and Sacrament. But men have blocked the way by unmeaning ceremonies. In some cases, you cannot get to Him unless you crowd past a multitude of saints, with the Virgin Mary as the chiefest among ten thousand! In some cases, a cold, complex ritualistic service is set as an essential avenue outside of which there is no possible approach into His presence. The way is blocked: it is shut up: and Christ is cut off from the approaching people. No wonder people run to all kinds of extremes. No wonder they throw themselves awkwardly, and sometimes blasphemously, into His presence. And where once there was a body without a spirit, need we wonder that they would have a spirit without a body? All the wild-fire evangelism, which puffs up and flames and dies: what is it but a reaction from the coldness, the deadness, the emptiness of a nice, neat, prim, exact, smooth outward shell of a church-life, without either blood or brains in it?

There are other ways of blocking the road to Christ. Any church method which emphasizes earth-avenues, or machinery propelled by earth-power; any church method that appeals to the animal appetite rather than to spiritual wants: every such church method shuts out Christ. And men who lack faith will not mount the roof: they will

not put forth extra or unusual effort to reach His presence and seek His help. The reason why so few men are in the Church in these times, is because the Church has lost its power as a spiritual force. This is not something that comes one day and goes the next—this modern attitude. This has been budding and blossoming for three generations, at least; and now we have the full bloom of it. The Church secularized, commercialized, spectacularized, and, throughout, de-christianized: that is the blasting influence and effect under which we live. It has blocked the church-door; and men are kept out by it. As a result, they have formed new alliances, which suit their natural tastes without insulting their religious instincts. And nothing can bring them back but the pure Gospel of grace; so that they know their sin as this man knew his palsied estate, and are carried, as was he, to the feet of Christ.

4. It is astonishing what fills the doorway between some men and Christ. They would go to church; but there are so many bad men there: they cannot stand it. They will buy and sell with these same bad men; they will eat and drink with these same bad men; but they will not be caught in church with them: that would be hypocritical, and they will not play the hypocrite—they will be out and out what they are. And then they strut past with a sort of peacock pride. Is there argument in their attitude? Is there good common sense? Is there the manly spirit? Do they really express the honest sentiment of the heart? Let me tell you, it is simply a subterfuge; and a subterfuge always has the cowardly element in it, and, as a rule, is the meanest sort of a lie. Jesus went into synagogue and Temple; and yet, there were scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites there. Jesus had religious fellowship with His disciples; and yet, there was Judas who betrayed Him, and Peter who denied Him, and Thomas who doubted Him, and all the rest who in one way or another proved false. And the man who sets up his con-

duct as over against the conduct of Christ, may not be a hypocrite, but he is possessed of that Pharisaic spirit which, in point of pride, is akin to that of Lucifer, and, as in his case, winds up in the bottomless pit. The man who has the spirit of Christ goes to church for the love of Christ: he goes to satisfy his hungry heart: and no hypocrite is big enough to bar him out. Why, then, are not such men at least honest and acknowledge that the love of Christ is not in their hearts and that this is the only reason why they ignore the Church of Christ? For, after all, the fundamental cause lies in themselves.

There is no barrier for the man who has set his heart on seeing Christ. The only way that Nicodemus could find Jesus was to go in the night-time: and he found Him and learned the way of life. The only way that Zacchæus could see Jesus was to climb a tree: and he climbed it, and the sight brought Jesus as a guest at his house where he made a covenant with Christ. The only way that poor sick woman, bent with her infirmity, could reach Jesus was by pressing through the crowd till she could touch the hem of His garment; and she touched it and was made whole. And no man who has an honest purpose of heart will be kept away from God's House by the multitude of little things out of which he manufactures big excuses. We cannot even deceive men: let us not imagine that we can deceive the Lord and His Christ.

5. The conduct of these men should shame the most of us. They believed in Christ's healing might; and so they would carry their helpless neighbor into His divine presence. And when they could not get near, they adopted the last possible resort: they tore up the roof and let the man down before Christ. Their conduct was not erratic: there was nothing spectacular about it in point of purpose. There was an ordinary impossibility before them, with no alternative; and they found an extraordinary method of meeting it. It is one thing to be sensational for sen-

sation's sake: it is quite different to do the sensational thing when necessity demands it. There are times when the unconventional thing must be done: times when the otherwise lawless thing must be done. Jesus healed on the Sabbath day: the Law was against it; and so, the ultra-legalists called Him sharply to account for it. But He was right; and He demonstrated it. He went through the fields on the Sabbath day with His disciples. He plucked the grain and ate, although the letter of the law was against it. And He justified His act by referring to what David did, when he ate the shewbread, which the priests alone might eat. He thus made it plain that all ceremonial Law may be swept aside when a deep, vital issue is at stake.

These over-conscientious people: I must confess, I do not like them: in short, I do not trust them. Scrupulous over trifles; and yet, in the broad, big things of life, you feel as if there is a lack of loyalty to ground principles. These people who strain at gnats but swallow camels: they are a dangerous element; they somehow are out of moral balance, they lack moral adjustment. There are people who will tell you it is wrong to go to church by the trolley-line: it is the shallow argument of the legalist. There are those who are afraid that tainted money may desecrate the Church's treasures; but they will use tainted methods by which they put tainted money into their pockets. They pile the church door full of neat little casuistries, shutting men out from the great loving heart of the Christ, who stretches out His hands and pleads with people, "I am the Light of the World: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And that is what our poor souls crave: we want comfort and encouragement; we want the light of life!

These men had great difficulty in getting to Christ: and so will you and I. A thousand and one things will block the way; but what of that? As a rule, the thing

that calls for little effort gives but little result. Jesus went the Way of the Cross to save us. And He says to each one of us, "Take up thy cross and follow Me."

Is there one in this congregation who has blocked the way to Christ by all manner of excuses? I hope I have torn the roof off for such a one and shown him that the real difficulty lies in his own heart. And then, may Christ's word reach every palsied soul, and heal it, and save it.

XII

THE WITHERED HAND, THE WITHERED HEART

Mark 3:1-5. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

The activities of Christ's life were both intensive and extensive. He healed all manner of diseases—the most stubborn yielded when He spake. In the house and the synagogue and the temple; on mountain side and lake side and wayside: everywhere He wrought perfect cures. A remarkable case is recorded in the text—remarkable in its nature and in the circumstances connected with it.

He entered into the synagogue. Where should He go if not to the place where prayer is wont to be made! And when should He go there if not on the Sabbath which He himself had set apart! It is almost impossible to think of Jesus spending His Sabbath at home: almost impossible to think of Him passing the synagogue when it was open for service. And the manner of His life should suggest how we should guide our lives.

1. A two-fold problem faced Him as He entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand; and the Pharisees watched Him to see if He would heal this man on the Sabbath day. He did not go there to court trouble; He went there to worship. It was trouble

that courted Him, and He met it. He more than met it: He silenced those who brought it. It is so easy to run into trouble. We start out with a good purpose—start, it may be, for some good place; and before we know it, we have gotten ourselves into trouble. We may find it in the church, if no place else.

The Lord had a keen sense which was altogether divine. We may have the same in human measure. In fact, all His attributes should be reproduced in us, though in finite degree. We shall never reach the infinite. In the life above, while we shall be perfect, we shall none the less be finite. As soon as Jesus entered the synagogue, He saw the withered hand. The imperfection, the disharmony, the defect, touched His sensitive nature—sensitive with divine love: and His love goes out to the man to set him in harmony with the rest of his race. What a multitude of things must have jarred upon the mind and heart of Christ! The sights, the sounds—those discords of nature; rude speech, rough acts: how they must have rent His heart strings! If a painter passes through a hall where colors are laid on without skill, the inartistic sight irritates his cultured spirit. If a sculptor moves among figures out of all proportion and ill-shaped at best, it is agony to his artistic soul. If a musician is compelled to listen to discordant notes, it sets his nerves on edge. If these artistic qualities were united in one man and he moved amid like scenes, it would be a very hell of horrors to his sensitive nature. And I sometimes wonder how the pure soul of Christ could stand the shock that the multitudinous disharmonies of life must have given Him, without some manifestation of its distressing effect. Now and then we get a glimpse: but so little of merited wrath; so much of unmerited love. It is a beam of the divine.

2. And now what shall He do as this two-fold difficulty faces Him? It is no time for subterfuge, no place for cowardly retreat: the issue is before Him and He

must meet it. The man's hand is withered: Jesus' love prompts Him to make it whole. The Pharisees' hearts are withered; and what can He do to make them whole. If He cures the man, He will make one friend and a whole synagogue of enemies. Will it pay? Can He afford to do it? "They watched Him"; and He knew it. He will do what His heart prompts: He will do what is right regardless of passing effect. He will cure the man; and He will so do it as to leave His enemies without excuse. That was His part: they will be responsible for results on their part.

The matter is too important—too delicate—to be entered into without due thought. A decisive battle was to be fought: there must be no false movement, no fatal movement. And so Jesus saith unto the man which had the withered hand, "Stand forth." He will have the man come out into the clear, so that his enemies can see his pitiful state and thus be moved to welcome his cure. He goes further: He sets before them the great alternative, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?" They did not answer; they could not, for there was no answer to give. So they held their peace.

The entire scene is very suggestive. Mark the majesty of Jesus as He calls this man into their midst. "Stand forth": let the people see your crippled state. "Stand forth": let hearts of stone be softened at the sight. "Stand forth": let men see God's perfect power in this man's perfect cure. Put side by side this scene and the silly enactments of so-called spiritualists. What spiritualist ever said, "Stand forth"? Not one! What they really say is this: Stand back; don't come too close; turn down the lights; things must be dim and distant or the spirits will not perform their part! When this man stood forth, Christ cured him—his hand was made whole. What has spiritualism ever done? What message does it bring from

the dear ones that are gone? What counsel, what comfort, what hope does it hold out in all its utterances? That which distinguishes it, has not a single crumb to feed the hungry soul. It reveals no heaven; it has no Christ; the spirit at last fades in unending space—so it teaches; personality lost, identity lost: all lost—forever lost. And yet some Church people run after it to their soul's hurt and their everlasting shame.

3. Jesus said to this man, "Stand forth"; and he came forth and stood in their midst. Jesus said, "Stretch forth thine hand"; and he stretched it out and it was restored whole as the other. At His command, sickness fled; devils obeyed; the winds and waves ceased. Everywhere was manifest His healing, controlling might. But when He spoke to the stubborn souls of men, they refused to obey His voice even when obedience would have brought them life. In short, Christ could not heal the hate of His enemies. And why could He not do it? Is there a limit to God's might? No: but there is a limit to its exercise. The sphere is a moral one: there the will is supreme and God will not do violence to it. In the beginning, He had said, "Let there be light; and there was light." For "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." But that omnipotent Lord, by whose word the heavens were made, will not take the human will by force and thus destroy it. He stretches out His hands to His people and He pleads, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die!" In the person of His eternal Son, He appeals in all the tenderness of His infinite love, "Come unto Me; and I will give you rest." But He never does violence to the will which He has created free: it would be an act of violence to His own attributes.

Jesus was all tenderness and love. He wept over the holy city; and His words show how deeply its fate touched His heart, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem: thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how

often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not." He used a scourge of cords to cleanse the Temple, but He would do no violence to cleanse their hearts. And mark the effect here. He looked round about on them with anger; He was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. They would keep the Sabbath; but they kept it as hypocrites. The bitterness of their hate on that holy day was the worst kind of desecration: they broke it in thought and wish and purpose. And they presumed to criticize Christ because He would perform a work of mercy on this man—the very kind of works which the prophet said He would do: and they knew it.

The little outward exact keeping of the Law: what does it amount to, if the heart is full of bitterness and hate! The mere going to church when Sunday comes; the mere taking part in the service: these are not the measure of the religious life—they are but avenues and adjuncts to it. The real measure of the Christ-like spirit is the outgoing of the life in works of tenderness and mercy and love. The man who will not do good on the Sabbath day, does no real good any other day—good as God rates it: mark that fact. The man who measures life by legal restraints, knows nothing of the law of Christian love. Jesus drew the line straight and distinct. They were legalists: so He said, "Is it lawful?" And then came the alternative which revealed the nasty bitterness of their hearts, "Is it lawful to do good, or to do evil?" to save life, or to kill?" There could be but a single answer, and none but the Pharisaic heart would fail to give it, Do good; save life. And that answer, unspoken but keenly felt, came down upon their heads like a judgment. No wonder they held their peace! No wonder they went forth and took counsel with their own enemies how they might destroy Him! He had exposed their hypocrisy. They were determined to have revenge: and they had it.

4. It is wonderful how the very hostilities that were stirred up against Christ, brought results that have proved a blessing in every age. Here is a case in point. If Jesus had healed that man without any question or quibble on the part of these Pharisees, we should simply have had an exhibition of His wonder working might and His marvelous pity and love. But when these men watched Him, with hate in their hearts, we get a moral view which transcends by far the mere physical effect. We get a view of the Law as Jesus regarded it—a view which shows it, not to be that unbending thing which no circumstance can change, but a reasonable rule of life which demands but a reasonable observance. We get a view of the Sabbath as Jesus regarded it—a view which shows it to be, not a day of idleness, not a day merely for synagogue service, but a day which should have its works of mercy—its duties toward those whose hearts we should make glad by proper acts of Christian love. And we get, in addition, a view of the utter hypocrisy of men who haggle over little technicalities, while the great law of Christian Love is trampled under foot. The Pharisaic spirit, more than once, was the means of bringing great eternal truths to light.

There are a few lessons here, which we should study with care, as well as apply to ourselves with care. Jesus' work was largely an individual one. He did not heal the sick by the score: it was one at a time. If you would do a real service in the upbuilding of the Church by gathering people into it, you must reach them one by one. Bring someone to Church—just one. Bring someone to Sunday school—just one. Center your effort on a single life: bring one into the kingdom of Christ. And when that one is securely anchored there, go out and seek some other one that is lost. The shepherd went into the mountain to bring back a single sheep—just one: and Jesus came into this wilderness-world to save your single soul.

It is personal work that counts. It was Jesus' method of blessing men; and His method is always safe and sane.

This man had a withered hand: others were blind or deaf or lame. There were leprous people, and palsied people. He cured all manner of disease. And he had but one means of doing it: it was the direct bestowment of the virtue that went out from His precious life. The same is true of every moral defect: there is but one cure. We may adopt devices for meeting special evils; we may enact laws against this or that vice, public or private; but they have no eternal outcome: they endure but a short time; and the last state is commonly worse than the first. The grosser forms of sin as manifest in drunkenness and debaucheries of every sort—the one eternal cure is the Gospel of Christ. An ugly temper, an unruly tongue, a spiteful spirit, the jealousies and envies and hates which we so naturally nurse: what are these but the withering of the heart! And they will cling to us and cripple us, till Christ tells us to stand forth in the synagogue and there works our cure. That above all others is the place where He will do it; and the Sabbath day above all others is the time of His appointment. It is true, the Scribes and Pharisees will be there and they will make their presence felt. They will fuss and fume and find fault: never mind them or their attitude. Your poor withered heart needs the presence of Christ; and He will be there and will speak your cure.

The House of God is not a place for men to gather after they have been cured of their moral and spiritual infirmities. It is the place for people to come just as they are. If they are sin-sick, and sick of sin, Christ will cure them. If they are ignorant, Christ will teach them. If they are discouraged and despondent, Christ will fill them with comfort and hope and cheer. When we enter God's House, we should enter with all our infirmities—conscious of their presence as was this man with the

withered hand. And when we leave, we should go, conscious that Jesus has removed our burden of sin, filled with a sense of new strength in our hearts as surely as this man knew that his hand was whole and went home rejoicing in his cure. Then every service will give us a stimulating uplift.

XIII

A PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Mark 4:21-25. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The man Jesus was no mere theorist: there was a practical side to all He taught, and a practical way of teaching it. He dealt with the everyday things of life—(things common and commonplace.) He did not drag His subjects down to trifles; but He lifted up trifles to all the nobleness of His theme. (He never said smart things for smart effect; but He illumined the loftiest subjects by the lowliest realities.) And there were no stage-tricks to impress it. There was always a dignity, and a deep seriousness, and a majesty, it mattered not what He used to illustrate His thought. His life had a solemn significance: He never lost sight of it. In word and act, He measured up to the profound purpose of His earthly life.

1. There is a self-revelation to the Christian life. (That is the first teaching of the text.) Jesus said, "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?" (There is a childlike simplicity here; and yet, it reveals a virile grasp on a great subject.) The light of the Christian life must be set in the proper place; and there it must shine. A man does not light a candle and then put it where it cannot give out its light. We should feel anxious about his mental

state, if he did it. If he has any sense, he will put it where its light can have the best effect. And—don't you see the point?—if Christ, by the Gospel, has enlightened you in mind and heart, He wants you to move in places where your light can reach the farthest and have favorable effect upon most people.

But the light must be in your life before it can shine into other lives. (The Gospel in your heart—the vital part of it—the living flame of it—the power there: it is this that will lighten and strengthen the lives of those whom you meet.) It must be no pretense. A painted candle gives no light: an artificial flame cannot shine. There is no power outside of life: in all the universe, there is none. If you see, anywhere, the manifestation of power, you know there is life back of it and, in proper sense, proportioned to it. A truth on paper has no power. The Bible, as a mere book, is a helpless piece of print. Truth, as a theory, has no force. It is truth vitalized in your life and mine that is vested with power in outward effect. If your mind, therefore, receives a truth—the mere impress of it—as a piece of paper receives ink from the type, you get no good out of it, neither does anyone else. It must become the current of your life, going in a life-giving stream to every part of your nature: then you will become life and health and strength to those who come within the range of your influence. There is no power in truth until it becomes a living part of intelligent life: then it will operate according to the avenue through which it is made manifest.)

And right here is the danger-point in every life—the danger of the outward impress of truth without the inward effect. There are men who balance truth and right in the cold scales of thought: men who receive and retain them as a book receives and retains print—an impress there—nothing more. The life of the truth does not enter their lives: it has no moulding power there. They may have an

abundance of knowledge; but the heart does not lay hold of it; the will does not act upon it: they are simply dead receptacles of devitalized facts. (It is the sorry plight of man in the state of nature and no amount of culture can raise him above it or train him out of it.) There are multitudes of just such people—people who have a name to live but are dead: they do not have the light of life. And there are those who have the light, but they hide it; aye, they actually put it out: they smother it.) And these people are not all outside of the Church: many of them, indeed, are within it. And they do the Church more harm than good. For a lighted candle out of its proper place is a very dangerous thing: and a church member who does not hold aloft the Gospel light in all he says and does, stands between the light of the Gospel and those who should walk by it. He obscures it: he does more, he causes them to stumble.

2. This matter is so important, that Jesus would emphasize it by a special appeal: "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." And that suggests the grave responsibility, "Take heed what ye hear." We are responsible for the kind of doctrine which we allow to come to our ears. (There is a false philosophy of life—a false estimate of the liberties that are ours by natural right. In this so-called charitable age, we are encouraged to listen to everything that comes in the guise of religious light. Common sense as well as common practice is against it.) We have no more right to take poison into our minds than we have to take poison into our bodies. We have no more right to expose our hearts to false doctrine than we have to expose our bodies to contagious disease. (If a man were to drink wood alcohol to see what it tastes like, the coroner's inquest would not result in a verdict that he sacrificed his life in the interests of science: the jury would pronounce him an ignorant inebriate or a deliberate suicide.) If we are satisfied that we have the saving truths

of the Gospel of Christ: if we are confident that God's method of building us up in heart and life is by Word and Sacrament; then we shall find delight in the rich provisions of His House, and we shall not be running anywhere and everywhere simply to put ourselves under the spell of the latest religious novelties.

There is an utterly false idea, these times, as to the real province of a church service. Its primary purpose is to worship God in the assembly of His saints: to unite heart and voice in psalm and hymn, in prayer and praise: to read His Word and meditate upon it; to be instructed in it and admonished by it. (It is God's presence that we seek in His House: we should meet there to worship Him in the beauty of holiness.) That purpose is supreme! If we add to it such instrumentalities as shall increase the joy of our hearts and make them the more responsive to the pulpit message, let us thank God for these inspiring adjuncts and use them to His praise. But whatever is instituted to take precedence over Word and Sacrament; whatever supplants the pulpit and makes it a chair of philosophy or sociology, or any other phase of learned life: whatever does this is idolatry of a refined sort. The worship from the pew; the Gospel from the pulpit; the Sacrament from the altar: these must hold chief place. And if we are truly renewed in heart and life, they will hold chief place. And then, just as our worship must be sincere; so we must take heed what we hear, and how we hear it.)

This is but one part of our responsibility: there is another equally important. And Jesus plainly states it: "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given." If we receive false doctrine, it will go out in false life. And we shall find, too, that our false life toward others will engender in them a falseness of life toward us. In thought and speech and act, therefore, we must be very careful

lest we exert an evil influence which may be endless in evil effect.

There is a balancing in life: as we sow, so shall we also reap. We shall reap the same in kind, and in quality, and in degree. We are the stewards of God: He holds us accountable for our stewardship: we dare not waste our Master's goods. He endows us with certain gifts; and He expects us to use them in His service. And for the exercise of our gifts, the Church affords ample opportunity. It opens avenues of usefulness at every point: and everyone of them, if properly employed, makes a man the stronger for the regular callings of life. If a pastor could marshal a score or more of his young people and they would stand forth in the enthusiasm of their young life and say, "Here am I, send me": he could use their spare moments for a lifetime. And they would not only bless the Church by their service: they would bless themselves. For there is always a counter effect to all true effort, and the saying of Christ applies here, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." The one who hears the call and obeys it, shall be blest with increased gifts. There is a normal development to all true exercise whether in the field of nature or the sphere of grace.

A two-fold responsibility, therefore, rests upon us: To receive the right kind of doctrine by taking heed what we hear; and to give our strength to the right kind of activities, so that in blessing others we shall bring a blessing to ourselves. And these two things should have our best thought and effort: they are the very pivots of doctrine and life. Wholesome food, healthful exercise: they make the man strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

3. And now, we find a common rule governing the outcome—a rule which reaches both ways, and whose effects correspond with the conditions under which we live and act. It is implied in the words, "For he that hath,

to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." If a man does not use the gift with which God has blest him, that gift will die. The gift of walking and talking is in every child: it is a part of its nature. But if that gift is not developed, the ability to exercise it will be lost. The gift of teaching lies within us: to learn and to teach spring from the same source. But if one grows up without exercising this gift, the time will come when he will be too old to acquire it. If the Church is to have capable leaders, the boys and girls must be trained in church methods and church work and church life. The gift to work aright does not drop down from the skies: the gift to work as well as the gift of grace is a development. And it depends upon ourselves, by God's grace, to train into service that which He has implanted in us by nature or grace. The proper grouping, therefore, of the young people of the Church for service along all the lines of the Church's activities, will make them capable as men and women to conduct the greater work that will await them when they are put in charge of the Church's interests. And then, home life and work life, as well as church life, will share in the blessings that go with all true culture of mind and heart. It is practice that makes perfect: it is the exercise of our gifts that makes them effective in every branch of service. Just as civilization goes with the Gospel of Christ; so efficiency constantly accompanies it.

And here, too, is where the application of Jesus' words finds its proper place: "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." The gift undeveloped will die for want of exercise. If a man were shut up in absolute darkness for half a life-time, he would lose the gift of sight. The lack of muscular exercise will, in time, deprive the muscle of the gift of development as well as the gift of use. And if we fail to use our God-blest gifts, the inherent power which God has put within

them will be lost. Two children grow up side by side: they have the same environment; they have the same opportunities; they may have the same endowments. The one rises into prominence; the other sinks out of sight. It is not the result of the difference in native gifts, but in the exercise, the development, the normal use of the gifts.

And we can follow the same thought along moral lines. The Lord endows every Christian with the gift of grace. But he receives the gift in an undeveloped state. By the grace of God, every moral gift may be made strong through its exercise. Every temptation met and mastered makes us strong to meet and master the next one. And so we move on conquering and to conquer: we do it by God's enabling might. And then, there is that other side of it. If we yield to the evil besetments of life, we shall become moral weaklings, and our power of resistance will die and we shall become the sport of every evil influence. It is upon this principle that habits are built—good and bad alike.

The words of the text, therefore, give us a wonderful view of the Christian life. In the first place, the Christian life must be one of light—not a hidden light, like a candle under a bushel, but a light set up in its own proper sphere and shedding light that others may walk securely in safe places. The Gospel light within us must shine round about us.

The Christian life is one of grave responsibility. It must guard against false doctrine, so that no false principles may enter the heart and turn it from Christ. Hence those warning words, "Take heed what ye hear." And it must guard against false practice, so that it will measure out that which blesses and come again in blessed measure. It must operate upon the principle of seed-time and harvest.

And the Christian life, like any other life, follows an unerring Law. A useful life is a productive life: the man

who enriches others enriches himself: the very process does it. In making others happy, you are made happy. Charity is twice blest: it blesses him that gives and him that takes. And the opposite is equally true. By failing to exercise our gift, we lose the ability to use and enjoy it. And as to the good we withhold, we find no pleasure in it. Our duty is plain: to scatter blessings all along the path of life and thus glorify God in our bodies and spirits.

XIV

THE SPIRIT THAT REJECTS

Mark 6:1-3. And he went out from thence and came into his own country; and his disciples followed him. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

There is one thing that always pleases me: it is that passage of Scripture which occurs more than once, telling us how Jesus went from place to place, doing works of mercy and love; and then comes the added statement—the one that pleases, “And His disciples followed Him.” It mattered not where Jesus went, they went with Him: if they left Him alone, it was His choice. In Temple and synagogue, on mountain side or seashore: the disciples were there because their Master was there.

I cannot help but point the moral right here. If people would only couple everything with Christ, or Christ with everything: what a mighty moulding force that would be! If they would only stay from places where Jesus would have no part; if they would only go to such places where He was sure to resort, the churches would be full, and world-places would shut their doors for want of patronage. But in this pleasure-seeking age, the most of people go to the place where they will find the best entertainment. It is the common practice; and the thought of it makes one sad at heart.

1. We have here a simple statement of fact: “And He went out from thence, and came into His own coun-

try; and His disciples followed Him.” They just went where He went: they did it as a matter of course. What else could they do? Where else could they go? You recall the sorrowful occasion when many disciples went back and walked with Jesus no more. And He turned to the Twelve and said, “Will ye also go away?” Then Peter, in puzzled surprise, answered for the rest, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” As soon as men realize that the greatest thing in the world is eternal life, and that the Church, as the institution of Christ, has the words that reveal it and impart it, then, and not till then, will they fill God’s courts with praise. It was this supreme confidence in Christ that led His disciples to follow Him from place to place. There was soul-emptiness without His presence and they were at all times keenly conscious of it.

“And when the Sabbath day was come, He began to teach in the synagogue.” It is just what we might expect—nothing short of it. The Sabbath day found Him in the only true Sabbath place: it found Him engaged in that which belonged to His prophetic office. And, the only thing thinkable, His disciples followed Him there. We cannot imagine, for a moment, that Jesus would go into the synagogue and tell His disciples to stay outside. We cannot imagine that they would go there, except to be with Him, and fellowship with Him, and listen to His message. And I often wonder if Church people do the same. We know the fact, “The Lord is in His Holy Temple.” We know the promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” But do we live up to this fact and this promise? Is it our one-absorbing thought, “I am going to Church because my Lord is there: I am going to Church to hear His message of truth and grace: I am going to worship Him and seek the strength His presence imparts!” That is the spirit and purpose which should bring us into God’s House:

and into that spirit we should train ourselves every day of our lives.

Let us finish the verse: "And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?" The multitude heard Him—listened intently while He spake; and they heard Him with astonishment. It was a mixed class of people, an everyday class of people. And yet He taught; and as they listened, they were filled with amazement at His wisdom and knowledge. He taught in the synagogue: let me emphasize it. And what He taught was Christian doctrine. And these common people found delight in it. When I hear a man saying that he does not like doctrinal preaching, I know what he wants: he wants to be entertained from the pulpit, not taught from it; he wants to hear soft sentimentalities that will bedew his eyes and bring a lump to his throat; he wants a jingle of words, though it be a jungle of thought. In short, he would have the pulpit of the "Sunday-supplement" type. But the true disciple of Christ does not want novelties to make him gape and gaze: he wants to hear of Christ—His loving sacrifice for poor sinners' sake—the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

And doctrine, rightly presented, will create the profoundest sentiment and command the truest respect. Jesus never failed to interest the people. It is true, when He came to the point of moral pressure, many turned aside. But when healing power was added to it, they pressed close: they would not lose one word He spake. And are there no miracles of grace? Is there no power in the Church, and the ministrations of the Church, to make people halt in the mad rush of the times? Take the power of the Church out of this nation, and would you want to live here? I know there are a great many people who profess Christianity but do not live it. I know, too, there

are people who claim to live Christian lives, but do not profess it. In the former case, they are bad in spite of Christian influence: in the latter case, they are good because of Christian influence. It is Jesus Christ who has made this world as good as it is, and no one else. And if the religion He taught were taken out of it, darkness would once more cover the land and gross darkness the people. The Gospel is still performing miracles in cleansing men's thoughts and sanctifying their lives.

2. And the power of Christian doctrine does not depend on the personality of him who presents it. The seed is made no better, no worse, by the character of the man who sows it. Good or bad, white or black, though he be, the power is in the seed, not in the man whose hand scatters it. If a man had to be absolutely pure in order to preach the Gospel aright, we could have no peace of conscience: we cannot look into men's hearts and see just how pure they are. And so, in one important sense, it matters not who preaches the Gospel, if only it is the pure Gospel of Christ. For no mere man can take the power out of it. And yet, there is a very vital sense in which it does make a great difference. The difference, however, is not on the part of the Gospel—it remains the same; but on the part of those who hear it. A prejudice against the man creates a prejudice against the message. If we despise the man, we are likely, at the same time, to despise his words, though they be the very Gospel of Christ. The Word of God is the food of the soul; but no one likes to take food out of filthy hands and eat it. The cleanest and the best food will disgust us in proportion to the disgust created by the man who handles it. And so, we are in perfect accord with that Scripture which raises the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?"—that is, to minister there? And then comes the answer, and the only answer that will satisfy you and me, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." While the power

of the Truth, therefore, does not depend upon the personality of him who preaches it, the effect of the truth, in the very nature of the case, is measured by it. The difficulty does not lie in the truth—its power is always and everywhere the same; but in the hearts of those who hear it.

There is danger, however, in looking to the man more than to the message. And that is a great mistake, and a fatal one. It was so here. The people said, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." All at once, they seemed to forget the wisdom of Christ and His miracles. They saw Him as a man with a common trade, as a man in a common home, as a man with mother and brothers and sisters, like themselves. And they took offence at Him and His doctrine. The human discredited the divine.

That is still the case with many people. They admire the teachings of Christ: they wonder at His miracles: they acknowledge that there is nothing, in all history, quite as beautiful as His life. They will even say with Nicodemus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." But when they read that He was born a helpless babe, that He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and that He died and was laid in the grave; then they take offense when He says, "I and my Father are one." They deny that He is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, as well as true man, born of the Virgin Mary. The purely human side is so evident that they refuse to accept the divine side.

3. It is strange how people are moved by the man rather than by his message. If he has a striking appearance and a pleasing personality; if he makes a show of world-wisdom, with a spectacular way of presenting it:

they do not care what he preaches. All they want is the enthusiasm of his presence, the brilliant bubbles he blows to their infinite delight. It is the parade and the pyrotechnics that entrance the multitude. I venture to say that at this very hour, there are more people following their natural bent than are gathered in all our churches. The service of God's House is too tame for their perverted taste: their palates crave world-spice; and they will go where they can get it. And yet, "The Lord is in His Holy Temple": and the church bells are ringing out their Sabbath welcome, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise."

I am not finding fault: I am simply stating facts. And if the facts are not creditable, sin lies at the door of those who are responsible for their existence. The simplicity of the church service, the humbleness of the man who presents the Gospel message: these are the barriers that shut up men's hearts. The people of the text lost sight of the words and works of Christ: they thought only of the man and his family ties. And when they found that these were common, every-day people, they rejected both Him and His message. It seems to be a part of human nature to put the person above the truth he presents. It is a sorrowful fact that the human side of the Church draws or repels most people—the divine side being pushed clear out of sight. If the pulpit is blustery and bright, or filled with pleasing grace, the multitude will gather there, regardless of the truth or untruth of what it injects. If the choir is one of the rapturous sort, or carries people by the ears into ecstasies: then it matters not what they sing, if only the emotional is in the ascendant. If the congregation will have a prelude and a postlude of gush and gossip, with a hand-shaking tournament to punctuate it, though it sugarcoats hypocrisies and lies, people swallow it and show by their smile that they like it. This is no mere pen-picture; it isn't the effervescence of a disgruntled nature:

it is the unvarying fact that every faithful pastor is called upon to face. And more than once the cry is wrung from his heart, "And I, even I only, am left."

We want pleasing manner in the pulpit; we want good singing by the choir; we want people to be cordial and considerate, especially toward the stranger within our gates. But above these—aye, infinitely above, we would place the worship of our God: it is supreme; and whatever weakens it, or overshadows it, or crowds it out, is idolatry of the grossest type. God's curse is upon it, and it will sooner or later be manifest. The ground of offence is ever the same: it is, in spirit, that which was urged against Christ, "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon: And are not his sisters here with us?" The Church's conflict never changes.

Now, all such people dishonor God: they treat the messengers of His choice with contempt. They seem to think that He must have great men to do a great work. They lose sight of that fact that He may use the humblest instruments to do the noblest service. He is not limited by human instrumentalities. The history of the Church reveals the fact that He chooses the good rather than the great. Spiritual life stands first: personal gifts and graces must take second place. The "who" of the man must be lost in the "what" of that which he teaches. The man comes and goes; but the message abides.

There are just two things to bring us here: the worship of God and the message of His grace. Whatever is more than these cometh of the evil one. We worship Him in chant and prayer and song of praise. He gives His message from the Bible, and from the pulpit whose utterances are based upon the Bible. The men who minister these are but human instrumentalities: they are the passing; the other is the permanent.

XV

A BAD MAN WITH GOOD POINTS

Mark 6:20. "Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous holy and a man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly."

We have a remarkable man in the text. He was a man of mixed motives. If you study one side of his life, you will say, What noble qualities! If you study the other side, the effect will be the very opposite. Herod was a politician of the shrewd sort. He favored and flattered Rome, whence his power came: he attended the Feasts of the Temple and helped to keep sacred that Holy Place. He stamped no images on his coin to remind the Jews that they were subject to Rome. And when Pilate would have set up a votive shrine in the Temple and thus desecrate it, he protested against the unholy act. A shrewd man was he.

But his personal life, his family life, was a wicked one. He divorced his wife that he might marry another man's wife: it was a most wicked act. And besides, she was a near relative—a niece: and that was an incestuous act. Adultery and incest: the two lowest, vilest moral crimes—crimes in which the baser passions play the chief part. What wickedness in high places! Politically shrewd, religiously exact, morally corrupt: it sounds as though the man belonged to the present age. And now, let us look at the particular incidents brought out in the text relative to this man of mixed motives.

1. "Herod feared John." And yet, John was in prison: it was Herod who had put him there. Afraid of a man with chains on his feet! Afraid of a man who had never raised his hand to strike! It surely was not a phys-

ical fear—a fear that John might break loose and make an attempt upon his life. It must have been a moral fear—a fear that conscience puts into the wicked heart. Aside from that fact, there were several reasons why Herod should fear John. In each case, however, it was conscience that made a coward of the man.

The people held John for a prophet. And Herod, like any other man in office, could not be indifferent to public sentiment. The preaching of John had made a mighty impression upon the masses. They had flocked to him from all sides. They had come with the great questions of their lives: they had been baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins. And the multitude, as they came and went, were not only impressed by the deep earnestness of his nature: they were convinced of his divine appointment. And Herod spared John's life, not because he cared for it—he was a murderer at heart; but because he feared the people. He could not face the reproaches of an outraged public.

Herod feared John. He held him in awe, because John was strong and true and stood for the right. The bad point in Herod's life was his weak point: the good point in John's life was his strong point. And when the bad king did a bad act, the good prophet threw the whole might of his moral nature against it. It was like the assaulting army centering its strength upon the weak flank of the foe. It swept everything before it. Herod had done wickedly, and wickedness is weakness. John, his righteous wrath intensified by the king's unrighteous act, threw himself against it. And Herod trembled at his presence.

There is a principle operative here which holds good everywhere. And there is the same human nature working out its devices according to the limitations of the times. There are men in office—I pity the poor creatures—men who are afraid of the powers above and of the

people beneath and back of all office. It is a wholesome fear: it were well if there were more of it. Politics is sufficiently corrupt: it would be infinitely worse if it were not for the fact that men, like John, with fearless nature, will reprove them to the face and before the public. And there is that personal side to this fact of the text for you and me. Your strength and mine lies in the purity of our principles and the justness of our cause. If we are right—right at heart, right in life—there is no earthly power above us of which we need to stand in awe. The good man has a brave heart; the bad man has a cowardly heart. The good man has nothing to fear from exposure; the bad man shrinks from it. Conscious of truth and right on our side, we can brand sin and shame, and evil devices and evil doings of every sort, wherever they meet the eye. The strength of the man is his heart—conscious integrity there, vital force there. John had it; Herod lacked it: that is why the king trembled before his subject. And you and I will be weak or strong, as we incline to either side.

2. The text further tells us that Herod kept John "safe." There were two mighty forces working upon Herod from the outside: the influence of John, and the influence of his wife. And there were two mighty forces working in his heart: the truth stung it, and wicked impulses goaded it. He had heard John; for John had told him to his face, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." And that rankled in Herodias' heart; and she urged and insisted that John must die. Here then was conflict: and poor Herod had to battle under it. And yet, it was his own deliberate sin that got him into all this trouble.

There is the record of an additional fact, "He was much perplexed." How could it be otherwise? The keen chastisement of John must have stirred up some spirit of revenge. And yet, something deep down in his heart told

him that he deserved it. Thus the very worst elements of his nature and the very best, were set in bitter conflict. The outer pressure and the inner sense: what a very hell it must have made in his heart! He had sinned: he knew it. His wicked wife thirsted for vengeance: he knew it. John was a holy man and just: he knew it. And what shall be the reconciling point? How appease his wife and not do too great an injustice to John, and, in a measure, satisfy his own conscience? He will do as most men do: he will make a compromise. And so, he put John into prison. And then, no doubt, he flattered himself that he had done a very generous deed. And what is the sum total? He soothed, just a little, Herodias' wrath; he satisfied, to some extent, his own craving for revenge; he saved, for a time, John's neck from the axe.

I am afraid the most of us are disposed to play the part of Herod on a small scale. And I am certain that we are often in the same plight. We listen to the words of the preacher; in our hearts we assent; but we have formed habits and made alliances which are in conflict with the Gospel of Christ. And so, we too are perplexed: we are in a strait. And in too many cases we try to effect a compromise. We will be just a little wicked: the gross forms of sin we will discard. We will not crush the life out of the good: we will hamper it and cage it. We will pare down both sides. We will cut off the grosser forms of sin and indulge it in milder degree. We will not throttle the good: we will only disarm it. And we will bring the two to the borderline of decency and respect. I want to tell you that these borderline bad men and these borderline good men are the most dangerous elements in our social life. They are too good to be in jail, and too bad to be out of it. They are too bad to be in office; and they are just good enough that you cannot keep them out of office. They are too good to be left out of our social life; and they are too bad to be allowed to enter it. They

are too bad to be in the Church, and just good enough to escape its discipline. And so, they have a mighty hold on both classes of people, the bad and the good.

But at heart they are not happy. For while a man may deceive the multitude, he never deceives his own heart. The most of us are like Herod: he was under two antagonistic influences. And between the two fires, he stood in awe. And these two forces, working upon our lives, make us miserable. The right and wrong within us, the good and bad within us, are in constant conflict. And we must throw ourselves absolutely with the right. At first, Herod only put John into prison: at last, he sent him to the axe. At first, we may stifle conscience and salve it; at last, we will smother and kill it. That is the history of every man who goes to the gallows; the history of every man who fills the drunkard's grave. It is the history of all crime and immorality, the history of every brutish and beastly life.

3. The text rather surprises us at this point when it says, that Herod heard John gladly. We hardly expected it. There is commonly a quick-step from bad to worse. Here there seems to be a check to the downward course. But it is by no means an unnatural one. A great man appeals to a man that is great. Herod was great along political lines: John was great along moral lines. There was a lofty nature about John that was irresistible. And Herod came under the powerful spell. And when John met him with the mighty message, "Repent: Bring forth fruits meet for repentance," Herod could not escape its truth and force. And there was the eloquence of an earnest nature—the eloquence which conviction enhances and to which a personal interest gives added force. Herod must have felt that John's reproof was not a mere pique: it was forced from the heart by the power and love of truth which ruled there. It was the outburst of a manly courage that could not keep quiet

when a great social wrong was done—an evil which, if tolerated in the people, would blast and blot out their national life. And Herod must have felt it. Besides, we infer that Herod had more than one conference with the Forerunner of Christ. And as they discussed this great burning question—the question of his unlawful marriage, what a charm there must have been to the man's argument! How, again and again, he must have driven the truth home to Herod's heart and made the man wince under the piercing thrust. And yet, it would seem that Herod would come back for more of it.

And that, surely, is reproduced in many a life: in greater or less degree, it is common to most lives. A man of impelling eloquence draws the multitude. There is a charm to his tongue that catches attention and quickens interest. There are men who spend the week in sharp practice, men who indulge in all kinds of debaucheries, men, it may be, who are guilty of crime; and yet, they will go to church and will be moved by the sermon as well as take part in the service. And more than once, no doubt, they are brought beneath the lashing of conscience and smart under it. But as Herod was married to a wicked woman so they are wedded to their lusts. And as long as the bond lasts, so long will they be slaves. Herod fellowshipped daily with his wicked wife: he heard John at irregular intervals, as mood might suggest. And the man who finds his chief pleasure in the companionship of those who give themselves over to all kinds of revelries and debaucheries, is not likely to be moved permanently by an occasional appeal from God's prophet.

And the trouble is, people praise men of that sort. Herod went to the Temple and kept the Feasts. Herod debarred from the Temple that which would be an abomination to the place. Herod issued coin without any image upon it. Herod stood out strongly for religious externalities. That was the good side of his life. But it had its

bad side. Herod divorced his wife: it was gross wickedness to do it. Herod married another man's wife—his own niece: it was a double crime. Herod put John into prison because John had said, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." And balancing the wicked over against the good, the good is simply blotted out by it. Let us not be deceived by men of that type: above all, let us not deceive ourselves. No amount of good deeds can cover a bad act. No amount of church attendance can atone for an adulterous life. No amount of outward respect for the truth, and for him who proclaims it, can keep a man from going from bad to worse. The man who, at first, kept John safe, at last cut off his head. It is the logic of every wicked life.

We have talked about Herod and his adulterous wife: we have talked about men of like type, dealing very broadly in generalities. But unless we find ourselves somewhere in the text, this sermon shall have failed of its ultimate purpose. And so, let me put the plain question to you: Have you found yourself anywhere along the line? Do you so guard the Church that nothing may enter to defile it? and is your heart wide open to every evil influence? Are there bad sides to your life that more than balance the good sides? And do you not know that the love of God and the lust of the flesh cannot dwell side by side in the same heart? It seems to me that a little self-examination, and a little self-castigation, might be profitable. Let me tell you very candidly: You cannot support the Church and keep John in jail at the same time. You know what I mean: You cannot put anyone under the ban of your hate, or your spite, or your ill-will, or your contempt, and expect your interest in the Church to overbalance it. Herod did a great deal for dedered the only man who dared to tell him the truth to his face. And all the money we pay into the Church, and the Temple; but he lived an adulterous life; and he mur-

all the work we do for it, will be but abomination in God's sight if we harbor wicked lusts in our hearts. Our world-life and our church-life must be one: there must be virtue and truth and love, making week-day and Sunday, work-life and church-life, an inseparable unit.

XVI

THE RELIGION OF CURIOSITY

Mark 8:11-13. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into a ship again departed to the other side.

A great scientist is responsible for the statement that the human race, in point of moral and intellectual development, has made but little advancement in all the history of this earthly age. It is a serious charge and a startling one. And the worst of it is, it is quite true to fact. In some respects, of course, we are ahead of all ages; in others, we have to sit at the feet of the ancients: and we shall have to sit there a long time. In short, we shall never be able quite to take their place. There has been steady progress along the line of the useful arts, and we have not reached the limit of possibilities; but when it comes to painting and sculpture, to poetry and philosophy, we go back more than two thousand years for the best examples.

If you enter the field of morals, the same conditions exist. No man has yet improved on the Law of Moses or Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The great Bible characters stand out as models for every age. And when it comes to the bad side of human nature, our worst in essence is fully as bad as their worst. Did they kill off their old people? We send ours to the poor-house, and break their hearts by the unnatural act. Did they cast out their new-born babes to the wild beasts? It is a common practice now to murder them before they are born,

with some disreputable doctor to aid and abet it. The criminals of old were savage as brutes: in our day, they wear kid gloves and support public charities. There is but little difference: the same bad heart has the same bad blood flowing through it.

It is not my purpose to particularize along these lines: though we might do so with profit. I propose, rather, to take a single element in our nature—one that is not so desperately wicked; and show that two thousand years have made but little change in character and conduct.

1. There were curious people in the time of Christ, regardless of their culture. It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that the Pharisees came to Him and sought a sign from heaven. They wanted some spectacular display, something to make them stare in astonishment. It was their constant subterfuge, "Show us a sign and we will believe." It is the old Athenian spirit universally alive. The people of Athens, you know, and strangers there, "spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." It was the novelties of the age that brought the gossiping crowd to some common meeting-place.

And this curious streak is not a rare accident of life. Some of us may curb it; some of us may smother it; but the most of people like to indulge it. And nowhere is it more manifest than along religious lines. There are people who watch the papers for odd pulpit subjects; and the Church that advertises the grotesque will crowd its aisles. It is not a case of the hungry heart seeking the food that will comfort and strengthen it: it is the craving of a perverted taste, which will be satisfied only with that which intoxicates. The advocates of a law prohibiting the use of intoxicants have put forth superhuman effort till they have accomplished their purpose. I am just as much interested in sobriety of life as they are. But I am confident of this one thing: it is not that which goes in at

the mouth which defiles the man so much as that which rankles in the heart. What is the heart feeding on? What does it drink into its deepest recesses? What intoxicates it? Our boys and girls are getting drunk on extravagant literature, on the comic pictures of the Sunday papers, on cheap shows, on blood-curdling moving pictures, and the like. Their hearts and minds become utterly debauched and debased; and when these child-forms of intoxicants have lost their charm, they turn to that which bloats and brutalizes and blasts. The true temperance movement begins with the childlife: it is careful as to what a child reads and sees, as well as what it eats and drinks. The child habit of indulging in all the excitements of trashy stories and trashy pictures and trashy plays, lays the ground work of a dissipated life and fills our reformatories and penitentiaries and poor-houses. It starts with a depraved appetite—the craving of the natural heart; and soul and body are damaged by it.

And unless the Church can satisfy that spirit which finds pleasure in the novel and grotesque, they will have nothing to do with it. That is the chief trouble of the times. The young people find no pleasure in Church service, not because the Church has nothing to give, but because they lack the capacity to receive. Do you suppose that our boys and girls can revel in stories of hair-breadth escapes, or pictures that appeal to the baser passions, or plays that satisfy the lower cravings of the natural heart, and then be glad when Sunday comes so that they can study the Bible and take part in the services of God's House? A perverted taste must have the perversions of life to satisfy it. And what shall be the corrective? The Home! Fathers and mothers must make it their daily duty to see that their children have wholesome entertainment—something that gladdens young life without degrading it; and that the fundamentals of our Christian faith constitute the controlling element in their hearts. Then

there will be a moral force within that will make them the masters of themselves, to shun and scorn the cheap and vile, and to choose and find pleasure in that which is pure and true.

2. The problem of the age is the problem of our young people. How shall we draw them into the Church; how shall we keep them there? It is the thing that weighs the heaviest on the minister's heart. If his interest in them is a deep soul-interest, he cannot depart from the Scripture principle, "No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him," as well as its counterpart, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." And from that principle no faithful pastor will depart.

There are those, however, who believe in the religion that appeals to the natural heart. And so the pulpit busies itself with the display of curiosities. The whole effort, in such cases, is to please the sinner with passing trifles. There may be the scourging of evil practices; there may be the castigation of prevalent vices: and there should be. But all this is purely negative; and negatives never have a positive effect. You cannot raise fruit by lashing and slashing the tree. There must be water for its root-system and warmth for its leaf-system, by which the proper elements of earth and air enter into its life. It is thus that the life-giving, life-developing energy reaches its vital part, and quickens and sustains it. And all the claptrap that the pulpit may contrive, though it be as entertaining as a comic opera or as thrilling as a prize fight, will have no life-generating influence upon the secret chambers of the heart. "Ye must be born again." And the new creature in Christ will always find delight in that which centers upon Christ. If I can succeed in putting the spirit of Christ into the hearts of our young people, in Sunday school, in catechetical class, in the sacred services of God's House, they will not be drawn aside by the curiosities that some other Church may indulge, whether it be in the pulpit or from the choir

loft. If the life and love of Christ is in their hearts, they will find their chief joy in worshipping God, with the set forms of the Church as the channel of expressing it. The Order of Service will be like Jacob's ladder, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it: their sacrifice of prayer, praise and thanksgiving going up to God upon it, and God's blessing coming down to them, through the same source, in rich measures of grace. It is this, and this alone, that will build up our young people along sane, loyal, conservative lines.

But we cannot ignore the social features of church-life. Under the old covenant—the various feasts which the Lord appointed by the mouth of Moses—there was a distinctively social element. And so, social life in church life has the sanction of Scripture. In Old Testament usage, however, the daily sacrifice was a solemn service: the social element did not enter into it. And so it should be in the Christian Church. Word and Sacrament, with proper forms of worship, are the only things that should enter into church service. But there should be equipment for the social life of the old and young alike. The more good doors we open for their pleasure and profit, the more bad doors we will close against their entrance. These are not novelties to draw them into the Church and keep them there: these are avenues of social pastime, under the Church's care, for those who are already members of the household of faith through the Gospel of Christ. Just as every home should provide wholesome entertainment for the children that are growing up in it; so the Church may consistently provide proper pastime for the young people that are connected with it. If these things, however, are depended upon to attract young people to the Church and keep them interested in her activities, then they usurp the place of the means of grace and become the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. **Everything** has its sphere and must be kept within it.

3. The people who looked to Christ for a sign, and nothing else, did not tarry with Him when He refused to gratify their desire. The multitude who looked upon His miracles with open-mouthed astonishment, deserted Him when He came to the point of moral pressure. Jesus never performed a wonderful act to gather a crowd of people or for the sake of popular applause. When Herod wanted to see a miracle, Christ scorned the man. And the Church that makes a display to gain the public eye, ceases to be a spiritual factor in the community in which it is set for spiritual uplift. As a rule, men get out of the Church that which impels them to go there. Herod was anxious to see the Holy Babe; but he wanted to take His life. And so, he sent forth and slew the little ones of Bethlehem and the region round about. The wise men were anxious to see the New Born King: they went to Bethlehem and worshipped at His feet. If the oratory of the preacher is all you crave, you get oratory and nothing else. If the music of the choir is all you crave, you get music and nothing else. That is the general rule: the exceptions are notable because they are rare. But if you come here to worship God, if you come here to be edified from the pulpit, if you come here to get spiritual uplift that the anthem is designed to give, you will have purer pleasurable emotions than the one who comes here for the show-side of the service and your soul will be strengthened and satisfied with the spiritual feast.

The people who go to church as they go to the playhouse, get playhouse results. They don't go to meet Christ, and they don't find Him there. They don't go to worship God; for God is not in all their thoughts. They do not go to seek the divine blessing; and so they go away unblest. You know all about those two men who went up to the temple to pray—the Pharisee and the Publican. The Pharisee went there to praise himself, and he made a magnificent success of it. The Publican went there,

conscious of his sin and confessing it; and he went home justified in God's sight. It might be wholesome for everyone of us to ask, down in our hearts, why we are here. And if, at bottom, the purpose is outside of the religious line, let us repent and seek God's pardoning grace, and let us resolve that nothing but a pure spiritual impulse shall bring us to this House. Let us not mock God in His own Temple. Let us not use the sacred vessels of divine service for an evening's entertainment. May the deep need of our hearts be the supreme motive; and may we so worship Him, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, that rich treasures of grace shall flow into our souls, speaking pardon and peace.

When the Pharisees sought a sign from heaven, Jesus sighed deeply in spirit and said, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." And He left them, and entering into a ship again departed to the other side. As a concluding thought, let me emphasize this fact: Jesus knew what to give and what to withhold. And He gave so much, so often, so freely! Sight to the blind, healing to the sick, hearing to the deaf: He cured all manner of disease among the people. He made so many hearts glad by His ministrations of love. But when men asked for a sign from heaven—something to gaze at, something to wonder at, something that did not supply a need or fill a want—He refused to do it.

And this is the lesson for you and me:—To come into His presence with a pure purpose of heart. If you want entertainment in this House, we refuse to give it. If you want to listen to curious, quaint things, you cannot find them here. If you want novelties and oddities, you must seek them from some other source. If you want witticisms and literary spice: we do not deal in that line. But if you want to hear the Word of Life that will open your spiritual eyes and strengthen your weary feet and cleanse

your leprous hearts and fill your ears with the music of God's love, we hope, by God's grace, to be able to give it, and to give it in heavenly abundance. May the services of this House ever prove to be a feast of fat things, to the renewal of your natures and the sanctification of your lives; that thus you may be strong to resist the evil and equally strong to cleave to that which is good. In this way, God shall be glorified and you shall be blest.

XVII

THE SERVICE THAT SAVES

Luke 9:51-56. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him, and they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

As we read the text, we realize that the Cross looms up in the distance: at first, in dim outline; at last, the Crucified One hangs bleeding there. It was an awful reality for Jesus to face. And how did He face it? He looked beyond: He saw the glorious outcome. The Apostle tells us that for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising its shame. And that is the thought in the text. The time had well-nigh come when Jesus was to go back to heaven whence He came. But He must needs go by way of Jerusalem, which, in real fact, was the way of the scourge and the Cross and the grave. It took firmness; it took steadfastness; it took fixedness of purpose, to leave His beloved Galilee for the last time, and to go, step by step, the shortest route, to the Holy City and face the cruel tortures.

In His mortal life, Jesus drew strength from the same source as we draw it. In the desert, He met the Tempter with the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit—the same Word which we use for our defense. And here, as He moves on toward the suffering and shame which

await His advent within the city gates, He does just as you and I must do when we are called upon to face the extremities of this life: He looked beyond to the glories of that heavenly kingdom where He should reign forevermore. And so, while He set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem, He looked beyond to the Mount of Olives, and saw there His own glorious ascension into the skies.

And we must do the same. The disciple of Christ, in the midst of world-worriments, should keep in mind the universal fact—and no one has ever yet escaped it, “We must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God.” They are the birth throes into the everlasting life. There is no possible escape from world-ills and world-woes; but there is always the blessed assurance, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” And that should satisfy every Christian heart. Let us now take the leading incidents of the text—the disciples’ side of it, and view them with the Cross and the Crown kept distinctly before our eyes. And may the picture be so vivid, so true to life, that we see ourselves outlined there.

1. There was a time when the messengers whom Jesus sent in advance would not have gone into Samaria: they had been taught never to set foot there. And there was good reason for it. The Jewish religion was the pure one: the religion of the Samaritans, who were a mixed race, was marred by heathen influences, and prejudices, and practices. And any commingling with these people, even along business and social lines, might have had disastrous religious results. A corrupted religion is more dangerous than open idolatry. It is deceptive: it is fair on the outside; but there is rottenness at the heart. Call a Christless cult a Church, and you have made it respectable, and even palatable. For to some people, all Churches are alike. But add a heathen name to it; and men will keep far from its coasts.

In the case of the Jews and Samaritans, it was not a

prejudice that kept them apart: it was a principle. It was the case of the pure worship of a pure race or the mixed worship of a mixed race. The only way to keep the worship pure is to keep the life distinct. A false religion is like a contagious disease: if you mingle with the people who have it, you are in danger of catching it. A pure religion does not have a like effect. A pure religion is somewhat like a person whose health is perfect: you never hear of a sick person catching health from such a one. The well person, however, may suggest a line of physical culture that will benefit and build up the one who is sick. My point is this: The lump never destroys the leaven, but the leaven changes the chemical nature of the lump. In things that are of a perishable nature, the sound object never makes sound the unsound one: it is always the reverse. And as the seeds of sin are in our nature, impure worship will have an evil influence where pure worship will not seem to have the slightest effect. And that is why we must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints: that is why we must fortify ourselves with it: that is why we must guard our lives against the influence of those who have no Christ.

The case here, however, has another aspect. An element is introduced that changes the whole situation: it puts a different stamp upon it. These messengers who are sent into the Samaritan village are followers of Christ: Christ tells them to go there; He will overtake them there. It is one thing to go where there are evil influences, because our natural desires lead us to the place: it is quite a different thing to go where a sense of duty prompts us, because Christ has commanded it. We can go anywhere at the call of Christ: we can go anywhere with Him as leader and guide. If there is some difficult task to be done, He will give us wisdom to do it. If there is some special danger to be met, He will guard our lives. If there are sore temptations with their alluring snares, He

will give us grace to resist. He will enable us to pass through the very fires. There is always an enabling might that goes with every order He issues. And it is adequate to each particular case. When the angel of the Lord said to the apostles, "Go, stand and speak in the Temple to the people, all the words of this life," they went; and though they suffered stripes, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake. "And daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." When the Lord spake to Paul by a vision, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee," he obeyed the divine voice, and he suffered no violence. And if the Lord sends you and me among Pharisees, we can go without inbibing the Pharisaic spirit. If He sends us among the Samaritans, we can go without infection from their mixed tenets. If He sends us among publicans and sinners, we can go and not be partakers of their sinful habits. The call of Christ implies the power of Christ to shield us from every hurtful snare.

And so, we must straitly distinguish between intermingling with a mixed-religious people, or a no-religious people, because we are inclined to wink at their heresies and their idolatries, and mingling with them because the call of conscience with the commission of Christ to inspire it, sends us there to make them likeminded with Christ. These followers of Christ could safely go to the Samaritan village, because Jesus sent them there. And you and I can do the same. We must be sure, however, as to the call of Christ. We must be equally sure as to the place where we are to go in His name to make ready for His arrival.

2. There are always two parties to every contract. There were not only the messengers of Christ: there were also the people of the Samaritan village. And the text

tells us that they did not receive Jesus because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. At another time, when He came from Jerusalem, they received Him: they listened to His message. But now, when He is going to Jerusalem, they will not harbor Him for a single night. And they were consistent, although they were not right.

There is such a thing as consistency outside of the sphere of right. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament. As Baptism is the initial sacrament, they will not marry anyone who has not first received that sacred rite. They are consistent. But we do not believe they are right, because we deny that marriage is a sacrament. These Samaritans sincerely believed that their religion was right: they just as sincerely believed that the Jewish religion was not right. And as Jesus worshipped at Jerusalem and not at Mt. Gerizim, which was their religious center, His religion and theirs were antagonistic. And they were but consistent when they refused to harbor Him in their midst. But they were not right, because their religion was not right. There is a time when we must be very severe, though people call us narrow because of it. It was the beloved disciple who said, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." The doctrine of which he speaks is the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. If a principle is at stake, we dare not wave it aside for the sake of religious courtesies.

A wicked man may be consistent with his own code, but his code is not right. A Church may be consistent with its doctrine and discipline; but unless its doctrine and discipline are right, it may be wrong at every essential point. It is not enough for you and me to say, This is what my Church teaches; therefore it is right. That is sectarianism of the narrowest sort. We must be able

to say, This is Scriptural; therefore it is right. And only where our doctrine, or practice, fills to the full the measure of Scripture, are we justified in claiming any recognition for it. First Scripture, then Church doctrine, is the order; and we dare not reverse it.

It is the attitude of the disciple, however, upon which our chief interest should center. We should have expected Peter to utter his protest; but it was James and John who suggested the summary judgment, "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" This is the spirit that has controlled the world in all its ages; and the Church has never been quite free from it. Fire to consume! The invoking of violence, the resort to might: what havoc it has wrought! It is the spirit of all warfare. The armament of nations for conquest has its origin here. The rising up in military might to resent an insult, has its origin here. And all world-quarrels and world-carnage can be traced to the same source. The war spirit is in the natural heart; and the divine grace of two thousand years has not been able to master it.

And even the Church has not been slow to adopt the world measure of conquest by violence. There was a time when the Church silenced heretics at the stake: a time when the Church drew the sword to gain temporal power and maintain it. The spirit of James and John is still mighty in the hearts of the followers of Christ. The Church no longer engages in bloody battles, with glittering sword to punctuate its principles. It is the fire of the tongue that flames up on every side. If you stand by the Bible, the fire of sarcasm is flashed in your face. If you stand by your Church, it is charged that you are controlled by the spirit of sect. If you do not plunge into every general movement, religious or otherwise, you are branded as lacking in public interest. In short, if you have a mind of your own and convictions of your

own and methods of your own, there is always a James or a John—some son of Thunder—who will call down fire, and quote the prophet to justify the act. The spirit is an evil one. In the case of the text, it received a sharp rebuke.

Hear the words of Christ; and let us take them to heart: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." I have no doubt these disciples felt outraged at the Samaritans' insult: and they thought that the offenders should be visited with summary judgment. Their zeal was all right: their Master's honor was at stake, and they would defend it. But their method was contrary to the spirit of Christ. The sword belongs to the State: the Church has no call to wield it. The Christian weapon of warfare is the Word of Truth, which is a sword to cleave, and a hammer to break, and a fire to burn. And the only true conquest, the only lasting one, is where the truth has laid hold of the heart, changed the desires, and sanctified the life.

And this is the underlying thought when Jesus says, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save." And His work is witness to that fact. There was but a single miracle when He destroyed life; and that was the life of a fruitless tree. It was all blessing: it was all grace. And shall we not guide our lives along the same lines? We must, indeed, stand by truth and right. We dare not countenance evil of any sort, much less encourage it. We must set our faces like flint against destructive forces. But we are dealing with mortals like ourselves. What power turned you and me from the world-life to the Church-life? What impels us to live consistently in it? Fire and sword? blows and threats? laws and ordinances? Or the grace of the Gospel winning us to Christ by the offices of Love? Let there be less of the destroying spirit and more of the saving spirit, and the work of saving will so absorb our energies and

be attended by such blessed results, that the spirit to destroy will lose its hold upon our hearts and the spirit to save will engage our noblest thoughts and acts. And then, in the very work of saving, we shall destroy: but if we go forth to destroy we shall not even save.

We started at the Cross: let us return to it. And in doing so, may we strive to understand the deep significance of those closing words of the text, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save." Let us keep our faces steadfastly set in the direction that saves, though we suffer the Cross in doing it. To save others by self-sacrificing is the message which Jesus here gives.

XVIII

ASHAMED OF JESUS

Luke 9:23-26. And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

It was not easy for a man to become a follower of Christ. He not only left his ship and nets; but his friends left him: they became his open enemies. It was the slurring boast, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" It is so like the sneer of our times, "Do any of the great scientists, the great scholars, the great sociologists, believe in Christ?" And then the wise questioner casts a withering glance upon those of us who follow the Master in evil as well as in good report. The young man who enters a university full of zeal for the religion which the Bible teaches, comes out with the conceit, "I'm not as orthodox as I used to be." And what does that mean? It means that he is ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: he thinks he has outgrown it. Along with his intellectual enlargement has gone a woeful spiritual shrinkage: his head has mastered his heart—enslaved it. The link of love is gone! Nothing but a rebuke from the skies will bring him to his senses. And what is true of student-life is largely true of all life. The culture of the age is anti-Christ.

The test of discipleship is the general theme of the text. There are several stages; but the sum-total is the

same. Jesus had just made plain to His disciples that He would be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes: it would be their supreme test. We know how well they stood it: they forsook Him and fled; at best, they followed Him at a safe distance. As all things are naked and open to His eyes, He knew what would take place. And He warns them, and thus would put them on their guard. They would need reinforcement in mind and heart for the critical hour: and He would furnish it.

1. He starts out with a conditional statement: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me." We talk a great deal about self-denial; we imagine we practice it; we do practice it in a degree. But the self-denial of which Jesus here speaks is quite different from what we would define it. If we deprive ourselves of one luxury that we may indulge a greater one, that does not mean that we have denied ourselves. To take money from one pile and put it on another, does not increase our riches. To lop off one luxury in order to pamper another, does not count as a sacrifice. And yet, that is the kind of a sacrifice the most of us practice. The simple fact is, the word "self-denial," like the word "charity," has lost its original force. Time has stripped it of its true significance.

Let us now take a closer look at this verse. Let us try to see it as Jesus saw it and give it the thought He gave it. We have, first of all, the conditional clause, "If any man will come after me." The word "will" does not quite express it. It were better to read it, "If any man wishes to come after me." And if Jesus said, "If any man has a real desire to become my disciple, there are certain things that must enter into his life." Deep down in the bottom of his heart, there must be an earnest, glowing purpose. And that purpose is, To become a follower of Christ whatever the cost. There was a time when

such a purpose filled our hearts—it burned there like coals from the altar of sacrifice. Did we forget it in our daily lives? Did we strive to fulfill it? Are we still striving to do it? Let us put ourselves to the test this very minute. There are three tests here.

(a) The first is stated in these words, “Let him deny himself.” As already suggested, the word “deny” has lost its original force. When Jesus says, “Let him deny himself,” He really means, “Let him renounce himself.” In our baptism, we renounce the devil, and all his works and ways: in the building up of our Christian lives, we must renounce ourselves. Self, the original sinful self, is what stands between us and Christ. Self wants to hang on to every earthly treasure. Get all you can and hold fast to all you get, is the slogan of self. I am not talking about money here; though the love of money enters into the case. I am talking of any and every thing that the heart desires—the things it craves and to which it clings with all its might. It is this sin of self that keeps multitudes from following Christ.

(b) If the first test searches the heart, the second one tries the reins: “Let him take up his cross daily.” This marks a progressive stage. Jesus had said, “Take my yoke upon you.” They had been under the yoke of the Law: He will now bring them under the yoke of His Love. In each case, it told of their attitude toward others—what they should endure for their sakes. But here, it comes back to themselves—what they are willing to do for Christ’s sake. “Take up the cross”: they did not yet understand how much that meant. When He went forth from the city-gates, the cross cutting into His bruised flesh and making Him faint, then they caught something of its significance. When they saw Him bleed and die, then they knew what it meant. There are daily crosses to your life and mine. And we must take up our cross and carry it, though at last our bodies are broken upon

it and our spirits are crushed by it. There must be the daily endurance of whatever, in God's providence, comes into our lives. For we know that after the cross comes the crown. And we know, too, that it is worth the price. The cross is bound to come: no one can escape it: no one with a faith like those had who suffered for Christ's sake will try to escape it. Let us, then, take up our cross and bear it with a trust that no trial can shake.

(c) And now comes the third test: "Let him follow Me." It means more than the physical act: it means the whole mental and spiritual attitude. "In His Steps": what a beautiful motto for the Christian life! To go to church or stay at home: what would He have done? To answer word for word and blow for blow, or bear reproach with meek endurance: what would He have done? Along the whole line of life, the attitude of Jesus should be our attitude. And how shall we know this attitude? By a faithful study of the Bible—Old Testament and New Testament alike. The Word must be our guide.

2. This is a heavy demand. Like the disciples, we are ready to interpose a counter-thought, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it!" and you know what happened then: "From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." Jesus well knew the weight His demand seemed to impose. He would not lighten it; He would not take a straw's burden from it; He would hold it up with all the discouragement and dismay it might quicken in their minds and impose upon their lives. He never deceived His disciples: He never dealt in half measures. He told them plainly, "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake." But along with it, He gave them that which made them strong to endure. So here: He assigns three specific reasons why they should deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow Him.

(a) The first reason is this: "For whosoever will

save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life, for My sake, shall save it." Is this actually true? It must be; for Christ declares it. To save and to lose, to lose and to save: how strangely these words change places! And yet these are everyday facts. If a man tells a lie to save a few cents, what is the result? He saves, but he loses. He loses tenderness of conscience; he loses self-respect; he loses rest and peace; and he runs the risk of losing eternal life. The over-indulgence of appetite ends in self-disgust; the wrong indulgence of that which, under proper conditions, would be right, ends in self-loathing and self-contempt. As soon as a thing is won by wrong processes, so soon the loss becomes an unchangeable fact. And if a principle of life is involved, the life itself is lost. It is a losing game any way you take it.

But reverse the case: whosoever will lose his life for Jesus' sake, the same shall save it. Is this true to fact? Every word of it. To save his throne, Pilate crucified the Christ. But he lost his throne; aye, he lost his life. For if we may trust Eusebius, despair seized him and he committed suicide. To get what he could out of the impending wreckage, Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He gained a mite; but he sent his soul, unsummoned, before its eternal Judge. But what of the Apostles? They gave their lives for Christ's sake: they followed Him by the way of the cross, by the way of the sword, by the way of the stake: they lost their lives. If that were the end, it were sad in the extreme. For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But that was not their end: they won the crown of life. And let me tell you: whatever we suffer for Christ's sake, whatever we lose for Christ's sake, though it be our very lives, we shall receive an hundred-fold for it in the life which is to come.

(b) The second reason is this: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself,

or be cast away?" We are getting down to real values: we are dealing with profit and loss with eternity as their measure. There are some victories that are worse than defeats. There are fortunes that are actual misfortunes. There are gains that are absolute losses. If a man piles up millions of money and goes to his grave without Christ, would you say, "I will give you my Christ, if you will give me your riches!" If a man becomes master of thousands of acres, but has no inheritance with the saints in light, would you say, "I will give you my mansion in the skies, if you will give me your earthly park and palace!" Gain the world—or a small part of it—for three score years and ten, or years four-score, and lose your mind, it may be, before you reach the grave, and your soul when you get there: eternally lost! Do you wish it? Do you not shrink from it? Is it possible that anyone can be so absorbed with time-riches as to have no thought of heavenly treasures? Is it possible that anyone can deliberately give his united energies of body, mind, and spirit, to the perishable things that this earth produces and be willing to lose eternal life for their sake? Would anyone dare to say, Give me earth-riches while this life lasts, though hell be my portion forevermore? No one is saying it; but multitudes are doing it: they say it in their lives. And it is the doing upon which the final judgment will rest.

(c) There is a third reason assigned here, and it is a personal one—personal with Christ: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." Aye, but that touches the core. If Jesus had come as a mighty prince on a war-horse, with banners flying to the breeze, the world would have shouted His praise: they would have rallied to His support and maintained His cause. But when He came in lowly guise, dust-stained

and foot-sore and wearily plodding from place to place, He had no room in the world-eye or the world-thought: men hid, as it were, their faces from Him. If Jesus had come with a new philosophy of life—something for the Stoic, something for the Epicurean, something for the sage: the world of lettered men would have flocked to His side. If He had come with a hocus-pocus performance, with weird words suited to weird acts and mysterious mutterings like the Sibylline Oracles, the whole orient would have been at His feet. But the man, Jesus, was so meek and lowly in heart, they held Him in contempt. The doctrine He taught was so humbling a theme, they despised it: they were ashamed to have their names coupled with His name. His simple life had too little lustre. They were not like the great Apostle. He said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ": "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And the world today assumes the same old world attitude. The meekness of spirit, the humbleness of nature, the forbearance in love: these marks of Christ, like the wounds in His hands and side, do not appeal to the proud of heart. The Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek," "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—they are ruled out of court. The spirit of pride so dominates the people that the gentleness of Jesus has but little place in their lives.

Ashamed of Jesus! Is it possible that anyone who has studied His life of love, should be ashamed to confess His holy name? It is not only possible: the most of people, in this enlightened age, have not confessed it. And why? Because they are ashamed of it. The world can march men up and down our streets: the Church cannot do it. The world can dress them up in all kinds of fantastic costumes, with all kinds of mystic emblems to give the brilliancy of world-life: the Church can scarcely get them to a special service, unless it is seasoned with world-spice. And why is it? Because men are ashamed to enroll

themselves under the banner of Christ: they are ashamed to let the world see their church attitude.

And now note what Jesus says, and be warned by it. He is coming again: In glory He will come: The glory of the Father will mark His descent: The multitude of angels will constitute His retinue! Has earth ever beheld such a sight? The glory of it! The glory of heaven shed over it and round about it! And the disciples, who were not ashamed of Jesus when He lived in lowly life, shall share in the glory of that second advent: He will not be ashamed of them, however lowly their lot. But what of those who were ashamed of Him, His Church, His doctrine—the rich, the proud, the despising, the hostile? He shall be ashamed of them, and appoint them their portion among the hypocrites. Let us confess Jesus here; and He will confess us there. Let us not be ashamed of Him in time; and He will not be ashamed of us, when He comes to usher in the eternal age.

XIX

THE THREE MEN WHO DID NOT FOLLOW CHRIST

Luke 9:57-62. And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

If we compare the teachings of Christ with those of the founders of other religions and philosophies, we shall find a great difference as to method and purpose. The letters that have come down to us from ancient times, are, for the most part, philosophic treatises. And it takes a philosopher to find the underlying thought and follow it to its logical sequence. And as for practical use, the great mass of people, not being able to fathom it, receive no benefit. The sayings of Jesus are the very reverse. There is philosophy there; but it is the philosophy of life. It takes up the common happenings among the common people, and by these illustrates and demonstrates the moral and religious principles that are universal in their application, irrespective of age or estate.

The text gives us three examples. These make plain the method of Christ: they make plain certain traits that are still in evidence, and will be as long as the human race endures. They picture religious discrepancies, re-

ligious lapses. And if we find ourselves anywhere in the picture, and do not like the looks of it, let us blame ourselves for being there. There are three kinds of men introduced in the text—three kinds of temperaments. And Jesus meets each man according to his native qualities. He gives the answer that fits each particular case. It is this that gives the practical turn to the incidents of the text.

1. "And it came to pass that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Is this the same Jesus who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Is it the same Jesus who made the sad complaint, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life!" It is, indeed the same Jesus, but under changed circumstances. We must, therefore, look for the changed attitude in the man whom He addresses: for He does not change.

The man was one of those impulsive, impetuous creatures, who throw themselves red-hot into a cause and then grow cold, as suddenly, toward it. They follow a common law of nature. Lead is easily melted: it returns, as readily, to a cold state. It takes a long time to melt a piece of iron: it takes a proportionately long time to cool it. The case of the two sons illustrates the point. The impulsive one said, "I go, sir." He meant it; but he didn't go. The other, slow to respond, said that he wouldn't go; but when he thought it over, he changed his mind and went. The same thing is taught by parable. The seed in shallow soil springs up at once: the first drought kills it. The seed that falls into deep earth is the last to reach the surface; but it lives, and it gives the harvest. The world of nature is full of examples illustrative of this point.

Here is a man who makes a promise that has no limit.

He says, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." He did not stop to study the insuperable difficulties he might be compelled to face. The impulsive Peter made a like promise: how sadly he fell short of keeping it! And this man, no doubt, would have done even worse. He evidently did not have the qualities to stand the test; and Jesus, we may well suppose, touched him at his weakest point, when He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Foxes have holes: they can run into their hidden retreat and be safe; they have a sheltering place to rest. Birds have nests. "Nests" is not the word here: "perching-places" is the real thought. A branch, a twig, will serve the purpose. But He who made all things, and without whom was not anything made that was made, had no home: He had no resting place here. A homeless life! the sacrifice: this man never thought of it.

The sacrifice of following Christ! Did Peter count it a sacrifice? Yet he suffered stripes, imprisonments, and death, for Christ's sake. And the minister who bewails the sacrifice he makes for the Church's sake is not worthy of the holy office. He sees only the flesh side, the mere mortal side, the money side. The privilege to stand in Christ's place and preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; the privilege of going from house to house, in Christ's name, with a word of comfort here, a word of courage there—a Christ-like visit: the joy of it overbalances, a hundred-fold, the little sacrifices we ministers make, the want we sometimes suffer, the hardships we endure.

And how shall the Church member view it? What were you compelled to give up in order to be a true follower of Christ? The Lord does not ask you to give up a single pure pleasure: He does not demand that you break off a single decent habit: He does not expect you to quit your daily task, if you are living honestly by it. Where,

then, is the sacrifice? Is it a sacrifice to keep from lying and swearing and cheating and stealing? Is it a sacrifice to keep from gluttony and drunkenness? Is it a sacrifice to abstain from a wicked, devilish, beastly manner of life? To call the cutting off of such things a sacrifice is all but unthinkable. Wherein, then, lies the sacrifice? Is it the money you give for Church support? The world gets more: and you know it. Is it a sacrifice to go to Church once or twice a week—three times at most? In that event, if you ever get to heaven, you will suffer an eternal sacrifice; for there they worship God day and night: and they devote all eternity to it.

What, then, is the true Christian attitude? Foxes have holes; birds have perching places: the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. But what matters it? To live in Him here, to suffer with Him here, and then to reign with Him forever there! Get the eternal measurement, and what is the outcome? "The afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." The man who said this suffered a thousand-fold more than you were ever called upon to endure. The miserable earth-stuff and little self-sacrifice of this time-life: how utterly small in comparison with the treasures that await us in heavenly places!

2. "And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." The case here is quite different from the preceding one. This man owes a filial duty: he ought to perform it. So he argues. But Jesus calls him straightway to His service. At least, that is the way it looks on the outside. The inside, we are confident, is quite different. "Honor thy father and thy mother," was the law which Jesus taught; and His teaching and practice were always upon the same plane—they never crossed lines.

Let us analyze this case. The first man was impulsive: he would rush in without forethought. The second man was a slow, calculating, deliberate sort of creature: he would balance duties. He could not see that a higher duty takes precedence over a lower one. He had not learned the significance of Christ's utterance, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." And what is that but the practical wording and working out of the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It is but the translation of law into life—the clothing of a principle with the garment of flesh.

And there is nothing cruel in the answer of Christ, "Let the dead bury their dead." There are two kinds of dead—the naturally dead and the spiritually dead. The Jews considered those dead who were outside of the covenant or who had wandered away from it. The father, you remember, said of his prodigal son, "He was dead, but is alive." And so Jesus tells this man, in fact: Let those that are spiritually dead bury those who die the natural death. And then he summons him to nobler service—the preaching of the kingdom of God. There is no doubt that this was all plain to the mind of this man of temporizing spirit.

The lower and the higher duties: who does not meet them face to face? And who, at times, does not find it difficult to decide? And that difficulty—let us confess it: that difficulty does not arise from the fact that we cannot tell which has the higher claim upon us, but from the fact that we have a divided heart. We like to do the natural act, though conscience tells us that the spiritual act should be done. We are prone to put natural duties first—they seem so important and so imperative; and we allow them to push spiritual duties altogether aside. The world duty, the church duty: which has the supreme place in your heart? The world duty says, Work six days from morn-

ing to night: and the most of you obey it. The church duty says, Go to church on Sunday—once, twice: and some of you obey it. And yet the world duty lasts but a lifetime, while the church duty has an eternal outcome. And the sin of disobedience here is even greater than that of this man in the text. He placed the lower above the higher one. But we become so absorbed with the lower duty that we forget all about the higher one. We not merely balance duties; but we balance duties with pleasures, and are prone to decide by likes and dislikes.

3. “And another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Of course, these cases are not exactly alike. It is not a case of balancing duties here: it is a case of dodging an issue—at least, of taking chances with probable defeat in sight. It is the case of a man who dilly dallies, and then drifts back into his old manner of life. Foreign Missionaries have this experience. The new converts are urged by their relatives to visit their old homes once more. If their request is granted, they never return: the current of heathenism is too strong for their weak resistance.

The man who plows the furrow must look straight ahead or he will make crooked work of it. When Lot’s wife looked back, she became a pillar of salt. When Israel looked back, with longing hearts, to the flesh-pots of Egypt, they were well nigh blotted out in the desert. “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”: it was the goal the great apostle kept in sight. If a man looks back, it is in love for what he has left behind—a love greater than that which he has for what lies before. He has a divided heart, the lusts of the flesh having a larger place in his love than the graces of the spirit.

It is this looking back, and the consequent going back that is killing our churches. And we must expect it. When Jesus cured those ten lepers, only one turned back to give God the praise: the rest followed the bent of their individual desires. What sad experiences our churches constantly have! The young people surround the altar at their confirmation service, having been taught the way of life: they make solemn promises there; but many of them go back and walk with God's people no more. They first desert the Communion Table; they next desert the Church service. New interests soon claim their thought; new affections soon fill their hearts. And then they are gone: the Church's hold upon them is lost. The young people are not the only ones who forget their vows of allegiance. There are older ones who by degrees find greater joy in a gathering of some Christless cult than they do in their own church service. They are looking back, away from Christ; they are going back, away from Christ: sooner or later they will be altogether gone. It is the looking-back people who worry the pastor's life and break the pastor's heart.

Has any one here a place in this text? Does any one of these three men represent your attitude, your state of heart? The impulsive one, who promises so much and does so little; the sluggish one, whose spiritual sense is so blunt that he follows the lower duty in preference to the higher one and justifies his act by his fidelity to it; the one with a divided heart, who tries to walk forward and look backward at the same time: are you figured in any of these? The first is like the chaff which the wind driveth away: he is soon gone and the place thereof shall know him no more. The second is like a man who stops a little leakage but lets a greater one drain his treasure. The third represents that large class of people who, like the Israelites, worship God but serve idols—the images set up in their divided hearts.

And what does all this demonstrate? It shows us how hard it is to be a faithful follower of Christ. It admonishes us to watch well the impulses of our natures and to see if there are any tendencies which may lead us away from Christ. It should inspire us to greater fidelity to all our religious duties and privileges—our enthusiasm never running away with our judgment, our clouded sense of duty never chaining us down to the lower spheres of world-life, and our hearts never set on serving two masters at the same time. When we say to Christ, “I will follow Thee,” we must do it conscious of the cost. When Christ says to us, “Follow Me,” we must do it with singleness of heart.

XX

CHURCH-LIFE AND WORLD-LIFE

Luke 12:13-21. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

It is truly remarkable how Jesus laid hold of every little event, found a root principle in it, and drew out of it some great rule of conduct—something that would lift life away above the low plane to which we poor earth-creatures are wont to drag it. It is thus that His divine nature shone out in word and act. For there is a divinity in speech. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee," is a charge that holds good, not merely in dialect, but in moral tone. A man's character lies at the root of his tongue: sooner or later, he will reveal it.

It was Jesus who said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." When friends meet, they talk about that which holds the largest place in their hearts. Business themes, social themes, pleasure themes; bad thoughts and good thoughts,

as they themselves are good or bad in spirit; plots, intrigues, kindly interest, tender love: the heart reveals them in the whisperings of the voice. The things you talked about before you came to this service; the things you will talk about on your way home: these are the treasures, or the trifles, that fill your heart, and which you count out, one by one, with your tongue. The tongue, we are told, is an unruly member: the will cannot manage it. It acts by impulse. And that is why it so often reveals the secrets of the heart, though the will decree otherwise.

The text opens with a scene in the life of Christ where something is thrust upon Him from the outside, and to which He must give answer without a moment's forethought. It would seem that a company of men were gathered about the Master to hear His words of truth and grace. There were lofty spiritual sentiments, void of all earthly cares and worriments and entanglements. Those who listened to them must have been keyed up to a splendid pitch of noble impulse, with not a single earth-thought to mar it. Such, at least, would be our judgment; but it was far otherwise. Jesus had scarcely finished speaking, when one of the company said, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." It was a cold, covetous thought, and Jesus rebuked it. He did more: He spoke a parable that made very plain the emptiness of all earthly enterprise, when earthly love measures it. And now, as we have this entire scene clearly before our eyes, let us take up the points they suggest and study their inner sense.

1. The Church and State Life, is the first thing the text suggests to me. And by State life, here, I do not mean the politics or policies of the State; but those personal concerns which the State must settle. We are told that one of the company said to Jesus, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." And this is the answer that Jesus gave, "Who made me a judge

or a divider over you?" Jesus declares a great principle here. And we who are His ministers shall do well to ponder it. There are things which belong distinctively to the Church, and the State has no business to meddle with them. Whatever belongs to the Church's inner life must be respected by the State. If the Church runs a play-house: the State should make it take out a license, like any other place of amusement. If the Church should resort to lotteries and other illegal devices, the State should treat it like any other gambling-house. In short, the Church cannot claim the right to violate any common law of the land: if she does wrong, she must expect the State to call her to account for it.

The State, however, has no right to pass a law which interferes with the Church's ancient ceremonies. Since the days of the Apostles, the Church has used fermented wine in the administration of the Lord's Supper: the State, in its zeal to wipe out the Liquor Traffic, goes far beyond its rights when it passes a law which forbids the use of fermented wine at the Communion Service. Since the days of the Apostles, the Church has used but one cup in the administration of the Holy Supper: the State steps outside of its province when it insists that, for sanitary reasons, the common cup dare not be used in our Churches. These both go back to Christ: and what He instituted, the State has no right to change.

Let us look a moment at the other side of this question. The Church dare not interfere with that which is the State's peculiar province. We have had, of late, a case in point—and a sad one. The Church preaches peace, and nothing else. But the Church has no right to preach against the war into which our nation has been drawn in spite of every effort to keep out of it. The Church should not clamor for the blood of our national enemies; but she can tell her people to be loyal to the State, to respond to her call, and to give their best service to its interests

in the midst of its terrible strife. The Church steps far aside from her province when she makes her temples recruiting stations for the enlistment of her sons into national service; but when she organizes her members into units for ministrations of mercy, for the safe-guarding of our young men in camp-life, for the establishment of such agencies as have in view their moral and spiritual welfare, she is right in her sphere; for these are activities to which all our Churches should lend themselves.

There are many local issues, which are a matter of city government: the Church, as such, has no calling there. The text gives us a striking example. Here is a man who has trouble with his brother over their inheritance. And he comes to Jesus with it. And this is about the way Jesus met the case: "I am no judge; why do you come to Me? This is a case for the courts to settle." And just here is where the Church must draw the line: Is this a question for the Church to solve? or does it belong to our local courts? Is it a civil question with a moral aspect, or a religious question with a spiritual aspect? If it is the former, we must meet it as citizens through our city government: if it is the latter, we must meet it as Church members in the maintenance of a true Church life.

2. The Church and Heart-life, is the second point suggested by the text. And here we reach the real province of the Church. When this man came to Jesus with a question that belonged to the judge of the common courts, Jesus refused to pass judgment upon the case: He did not give the least hint as to what should be done. But there was a moral issue involved here; and see how quickly He lays hold of it and declares a great principle that underlies all true moral life. The case was not merely one of inheritance—how to divide it aright. A greedy, grasping spirit was manifest; and Jesus was not slow to expose it. He might have turned on the man with sharp

rebuke; but He did not do it. He turned to the multitude and said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Let us remember that this statement was called out by the appeal of the man to Jesus in reference to his property rights and that Jesus went back to the spirit underlying it.

If the spirit of love had filled these brothers' hearts, there would have been no dispute about the inheritance. There was the spirit of greed here. Both, it may be, were at fault; both, it may be, coveted the larger part, or even the whole of it. And this furnished Jesus the opportunity to press home a very important principle.

There is, first of all, a word of warning; and then, there is a reason for it. "Take heed": "Beware of covetousness." Covetousness is one of the primary sins; and God gave a special law—two, in fact—to cover it. If the spirit of covetousness did not fill men's hearts, our courts of justice would have but few cases to settle. It is human greed that lies back of all property disputes. The little misunderstandings between neighbors could easily be adjusted, if there was the generous impulse on both sides. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house." But men not only covet their neighbor's inheritance and home: they will resort to all kinds of trickeries in order to secure them. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife"; but men will not listen to God's voice: they follow the leadings of their own lustful hearts, and the courts grind out divorces in sickening measure. As over against the covetous spirit, we should cultivate the generous spirit—the spirit of brotherly love.

And then follows the reason. For Jesus never suggested a rule of conduct without assigning an adequate reason for it: He never laid down arbitrary rules. And this is the reason He assigns in this case. "For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which

he possesseth." Is that true, as an abstract principle? If we are to judge by what we see, we shall be forced to conclude that it is not true, or that men do not understand it. What do we witness on every side? Men are working six days of the week to gather earth's perishable treasures. They never allow the almighty dollar to get out of their sight. The quiet of the home: they cannot endure it. They work with their nerves on edge—strained to the utmost; and as to their pleasure and pastime, excitement must be the ruling element. The Church and church-life have no hold on their hearts. Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace: and that is the very thing they do not want. If they can but gather earth-store, and feast and fatten on it; they are, in a measure, content. They make wonderful provision for the animal man; and to that one thing they bend their energies. And yet, Jesus says, That is not life: that does not constitute the chief thing of life. The land on which we live; the stores which we gather from it: these perish in their use. We have them but a short time; we cannot carry them beyond the grave; why, then, spend our strength in gathering that which does not last!

3. It is one thing to state a principle: it is sometimes not so easy to make it understandable. But Jesus was always equal to the task: He knew the principle, and He knew how to illustrate it. The theme, however, broadens at this point. Work life and church life are set side by side, with a parable to produce a startling effect. "The Rich Fool," is the common title. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be

merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

That makes plain a great truth which every one believes but very few practice. There is a tremendously sad side to this picture. A rich man, increasing in riches: his whole thought centered upon it; his whole energy given to it; his whole heart finding pleasure in it and in nothing else. He adds store to store, till his barns are too small to hold his grains and fruit. A prosperous man was he. Read these lines; leave the man out of them; and what impression do we get? One might suppose that these barns were planned to feed cattle! It is the animal man for which these provisions are being made: you would never suspect that he had either a mind or a heart. And the day came when God called him to account for it. And when He called him a fool, He named him aright. If a man were to clothe one arm and leave the other bare, we should think him a fool, or something worse. How, then, shall we rate the man who feeds his body and lets his soul starve? Let us be slow to judge, lest we fall under the condemnation of this Scripture, "Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

What are you working for? What are you putting into your storehouse? potatoes and cabbage and the like? We certainly must make provision for these bodies. But do we stop there? Have our minds and our hearts no place in our daily program? Do we sit down three times a day and feed our bodies? and doesn't the soul get a single bite? Do we read the daily papers, with their catalogue of crime? and do we refuse to take a church paper, which tells us of church activities and deals with spiritual realities? Do we work six days to feed our bodies? and when Sunday comes, is there little or no thought as to our soul-refresh-

ment? It might be well for every one of us to ask ourselves: In what respect am I doing differently from the rich man of the text? And if God should call us to account, as He did in this case, would He say, as He did here, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?" It is not a question of big barns bursting with fruit: it is a question of attitude. Gather riches if you please; but do not rob God in order to do it: do not rob your soul of its eternal peace.

These, then, are the three points that I have found in the text: The Church and State-life, the Church and Heart-life, the Church and Work-life. And at every turn, we realize that we have an interested part. If we are truly in the Church—which means that we live a true Church life, we shall know what God expects of us in every sphere into which we are brought by His guiding providence, and we shall have the grace, too, to perform that service which He appoints and to attain that goal which He has set for our lives. To be rich toward God is the greatest possible riches: it should therefore hold first place in our hearts and lives.

XXI

THE EVER-PRESENT FUTURE

Luke 12:39. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

The text states a simple fact to which everyone gives ready assent. There is no room for dispute here; for universal experience establishes it. No man would sleep if he knew what hour the thief would come. He would watch, and be ready to give him the right kind of a welcome. And so, we shall not attempt to argue the point, but will dismiss it with this passing notice.

But these words are very suggestive: they open up a world of thought. And a wholesome kind of thinking, they excite. It is this fact that makes the verse such a timely text. For facts differ in effect. Some facts seem to have no effect: you mention them and that is the end of it. Others are no sooner brought to your notice, than they stir up the keenest inquiries and start countless streams of imaginary contingencies which might possibly arise: thus they have a wonderful reflex influence. Indeed, the effect of the Future—the possible future as well as the established future: the effect of the Future upon the Present is far greater than we commonly suppose. If we reflect a moment, we shall see the force of this statement. Let us particularize a little and follow the leading of the suggested thought. I am sure we shall do it with interest and profit.

1. If the robber comes, it is at an unannounced time: it is a possible future in every home—not a necessary future. There is, however, such a thing as an impossible

future. The future of impossibilities: what is it? It is thought let loose—the mind, unbridled, running into all kinds of relations and conditions that have no basis in fact and are totally outside the range of the possible. The mere dreamer feeds on it. And he does so with no thought of attainment. It is just a pleasing reverie—a moving picture that passes before the eye with a sort of pleasurable effect: nothing more. It isn't intended to be anything more. There may be lofty ideals in it, a high moral tone, nothing base or debasing about it. It does no positive harm, except, perhaps, to induce an aimless life. At most, its effect is but a negative one. It is only when it runs out into vile affections and sinful lusts that it pollutes the mind and heart, and paves the way for all kinds of evil acts. It then becomes very positive—destructively positive.

There are two elements in it which may prove disastrous in the outcome. The one is where the mind revels in impossibilities till they seem possible. The other is where evil impossibilities suggest corresponding evil possibilities. In the former case, the mind becomes unbalanced, the brain breaking under the unnatural pressure. In the latter, the result is a series of crimes that send a shudder round the globe. These are quicksands into which we have no business to set our feet: it would mean the forfeit of our life—the forfeit of our eternal peace. Guard well thy thoughts. If you find a tendency in your day-dreams to carry you out upon the sea of impossibilities; if you find the habit growing upon you, and an increasing pleasure in it: call a halt at once, or you will make shipwreck of your life. The insane asylums, the reformatories, the prison-houses, are full of people whose minds reveled in impossibilities, until they lost their balance or broke loose in crime. And even where there is not this wreckage of the mental or moral part, there is that which unfits for solid service. The impractical people, the visionary peo-

ple—people of wild extravagances as to possibilities: what are they but the creation of extravagant thought. And so, that which is not a sin in itself, becomes a sin in its processes and in its unfailing results. And here, as elsewhere, the ultimate is the true measure of the act. It is the essence of the thing that determines its outcome.

2. There is, in the next place, the vision of the improbable future. The future of improbabilities: the outcomes that are possible but never materialize! How it harasses the heart and makes utterly wretched everyone who is possessed of it! It vexes most lives. Jesus warns against it when He says, "Take no thought for the morrow." There are people who are forever borrowing trouble: they see nothing but the possible disaster of every issue. They are so certain as to the accomplishment of the evil they anticipate, that they are actually disappointed if it does not come. By their very attitude, therefore, they court and contribute toward it. They look into the future—far into it: they are sure they will come to want in old age; they will be helpless, and no one will care for them; they will be sick, and no one will nurse them; they will be hungry, and no one will feed them. And all this thought in the midst of the greatest abundance. If they plant, they worry about the harvest: the sun will scorch it; the frost will nip it. Fire and storm, heat and cold, flood and drought, are among the certainties of their future. And they worry over them as much as if they were in the midst of their ravages. This is no pen-picture: we all know people who are afflicted with an imagination which runs riot on every possible issue that has any probability to it.

The life that is harassed by visions such as these cannot be a prosperous or a happy one. To live at the base of an avalanche that any minute might break from its moorings and bury all beneath it; to live with vast water-floods dammed high above, that might at any moment

burst their barriers and drown and destroy all before it; to live at the foot of a volcano which might pour out, any minute, its molten contents and consume every living thing on every side: what a constant nightmare that would be! And yet there are such places, with disasters such as these. And people who live within their range may well worry as to their possible disastrous effects. But it is almost inconceivable that any one, in the midst of a reasonable measure of security on every side, and the multitude of sources from which we are enabled to draw our daily supplies: it is inconceivable that any one should make himself and everyone else miserable by worrying and fretting about the future. It is wrong; because it unfits a man for the daily duties of life. It depresses and discourages: it kills the spirit of enterprise: it helps to bring about the very conditions it wishes to escape: it saps the life of purpose and hope. And worse than that: it is wrong, because it distrusts God; it doubts His promise; it treats Him as if He were powerless before world-forces. It is so unlike the confidence of the Psalmist: "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And he said it because God inspired him to say it. And do we not have a share in His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"? And if we do not trust Him to take care of our bodies; what about our souls? Can we be confident that, in His eternal keeping, they will be safe? Distrust has a far-reaching effect. If we distrust God at one point, we shall distrust Him at every other point. And if we trust Him for the greater, the soul-care, we surely should trust Him for the less, the body-care. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?"

3. The future of impossibilities, the future of improbabilities—the visionary future and the future of possible evil outcomes: let us get away from these; and let

us face the future of everyday fact. For there are great future facts—facts that we cannot escape, facts that we should not try to escape; and we should keep them constantly before our eyes. There was a possible future of the text: “If the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.” The implication is that the thief came. And so the possible future became the future of fact. And what are some of the future facts that bear directly upon our lives—facts of whose certainty we do not have the least doubt? We do not have to search for them as for hid treasures: they abound on every side.

(a) There is that fact of Scripture, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” We know it; for it is a fact of nature: and we know that we cannot escape it. It comes like a thief in the night. It takes the young as well as the old; the strong as well as the weak; the good as well as the bad. It is no respecter of persons: it treats all alike. But while we cannot cancel its power, we can counteract its effect. We can so live that death becomes the gateway into life. God has made it possible: it is a part of His eternal purpose. But what of our part? Are we looking to death as the gateway into life? Are we facing it in that spirit? The whole of this lower life should have before it the gateway into the higher life—not as a gloomy prospect, but as a glorious outcome. We go to school from seven to ten years to prepare for some one of the higher callings of life. We spend from three to five years to learn a common trade. We enter a store and toil for twenty years to reach the head of some department. We are all the time getting ready for the future. And men praise us for our diligence and foresight. But what time and thought do we give to meet that one great event; so that when we pass out of this smaller life, we shall enter into the larger life? Who of

us comes to Christ with the one all-absorbing question, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" We give our time and strength to mere temporalities: good things they may be; but they do not outlast time—they have no eternal value.

(b) And there is the fact of an abundant entrance into life? We do not want to be saved so as by fire. We do not want to be snatched as brands from the burning. We do not want to be crucified for our crimes one minute and enter into Paradise the next. Let us thank God that He can save to the uttermost, that He is willing to do it, that He has done it. But with the knowledge which we have, and the opportunities which we have, and the incentives which we have, we should be anxious and ambitious to go from strength to strength and from grace to grace. Every man with a manly nature strives to improve his knowledge and his skill and the wares he makes, whatever they may be. And every Christian ought to make it the supreme purpose of his life to move onward and upward in spiritual things. There should be a daily growth in grace, a daily development: there should be a broadening and a deepening of religious principles, that will multiply our happiness here and safeguard us against the wiles of the wicked one. And the great underlying purpose should be, not to meet the fact of death, but to meet the fact of life. The grave is but a passing incident: the realities lie beyond it, and it is for these realities that we should prepare our minds and hearts. Just as every man with exalted conceptions of the possibilities of his nature, makes the best preparation possible for the duties of this present life; so each and every one of us should strive, by the appointed instruments of God's grace, even Word and Sacrament, to prepare for the highest possible happiness of the heavenly home.

(c) The last great fact upon which I shall touch, to-night, is the fact of the judgment. We shall all stand

before the judgment seat of Christ. It is the final future that everyone must face. And if the man who suspects that the thief is coming at a certain hour of the night will guard his house and the treasures that are in it, shall we not watch and pray, so that the last great day does not take us unawares? It surely would be the part of unwisdom not to do it. And yet, the most of people take no thought of it. They move on from day to day, in business or pleasure, as if there were nothing beyond this life. The most of us are day-creatures: we seem to think that sufficient unto the day is the good we can get out of it, with the world's standard of what goodness implies. We get ready for everything except the great eternal fact—the fact that settles our eternal estate. And just here is where we differ so widely from the Apostles. They kept that last day full in sight. They looked forward to it; they planned in view of it; they were ready at all times to welcome it. It was their daily thought. And they were right: they were consistent. In all else, we look to the outcome: we surely ought to do it where our souls are at stake.

“If the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would have come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.” And shall we not do the same? There are certain gateways through which Satan would come into our hearts and wreck our lives. He steals one man's soul by bad habits. He allures him to indulge in those things which, by continuance, will debauch him and drag him down to the lowest kind of an immoral life. He steals another man's soul through his good habits. He makes him believe that he needs neither Christ nor the Church of Christ: that he can be saved by the uprightness of his own life. He steals another man's soul by business engagements. He tells him: you work hard, and you must have rest: go into the woods and along the streams; worship the God

of nature; gladden your eyes with nature-sights and your ears with nature-sounds; and thank and praise Him for His goodness and grace. In a thousand ways, the devil steals into men's hearts when they least suspect it, and robs them of everything which God would put there through Christ.

It becomes us, therefore, to guard well the gateway of our hearts; so that the thief of souls does not break in and destroy the rich furnishings of God's grace. Then we shall not worry about the little futures that affect only our bodies; but the soul's future shall be our one consuming care: we shall get ready for it and rejoice when it comes.

XXII

THE DISCERNMENT OF THE TIMES

Luke 12:54-56. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

It is an acknowledged fact that every principle of jurisprudence is rooted in the Ten Commandments. There is not a single relation of life—Family, Church, or State—that does not find its true foundation there. A man like Moses could never have formulated such universal rules—rules whose universality reaches out, not only into every kindred, tongue and tribe, but also into all the moral avenues of all time, with the varied grades and degrees of civilization that mark it.

As we come to the New Testament and look into the life of Christ, we find the same principle. In word and deed, in parable and miracle, in the sermon on the mount, in the storm on the lake; as He ate; as He sat by the well-side or by the way-side to rest; in Temple and synagogue, in the house or on the street: anywhere and everywhere, the sum-total reveals the wisdom that is altogether heavenly and divine. And the universal verdict is that, in word and work, the power of God is manifest. The centuries that have come and gone since His advent, have not changed the verdict. And time will never change it.

The simplicity of almightiness was the charm of His life. When God builds a tree, He does not gather the material as men do when they build a house. He works through the silent processes of nature: there is an unseen

infinite might. When God writes the Bible, He does not send the Prophets and Apostles to the great world-libraries, where they may consult the best thought of each preceding age, and then spend months and years in compiling the material that enters into the Testaments: nothing of the sort. There is that silent process such as marks the developments in nature; and holy men of God, by a mighty inward impulse, spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

These thoughts are right in line with the text. It deals with simple facts of nature, and a sharp application to men's lives. And those to whom Jesus spake must have quailed under the cutting rebuke. The medicine was suited to the disease. It was a bitter dose which He put to their lips; and they were compelled to swallow it. There is set before us here a fact of nature. Jesus said to these people, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass." And then comes that scathing comment, "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; how is it that ye do not discern this time?"

1. And we wonder why. The cloud appealed to the eye; and the eye judged by the darkness of the mass and the speed with which it came, that a shower would soon come. These men had so studied the sky that they could predict the storm almost to the minute. In the case of the south wind, the sense of touch decided the coming of the heat, as the sense of sight was used to forecast the shower. And in either case, the forecast was practically correct. And if the natural sense figures so accurately the coming of natural events, has man no spiritual sense by which he can determine the spiritual bearing of the times?

As a matter of fact, how was it when Jesus came?

Just as Patriarchs and Prophets had pictured it. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." And when He was about to return to the Father, whence He came, He said to His disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." The whole Bible—their whole Bible—testified of Christ: and they should have discerned it as readily as they discerned the face of the sky.

And not only did the Scriptures testify of Christ; but the life of Christ fulfilled the Scriptures. "When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" was the exclamation of the people. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, this was his honest acknowledgment, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him." Follow His life, step by step; hear His words of truth and grace; mark His miracles of love; see God's almightiness everywhere in word and act: and are not the evidences as plain as the cloud that sweeps the skies, or the softening breeze that whispers the coming of the heat!

And the man who shuts his eyes to the sight; who closes every sense against the apparent fact of the divinity of Christ: what shall we say of him? How designate him? Jesus says that such a man is a hypocrite. He sees; but he will not acknowledge it: he feels; but he will not confess it: he knows; but he denies it. A hypocrite! Some people imagine that there are hypocrites only in the Church. It is a grand mistake. There are more hypocrites outside the Church than in it. The man who sees no good in the Church of Christ, belies his experience as well as his observation. He knows that every Gospel prin-

ciple is true and right. The man who says that the Church has no moral weight, lies in his heart and to his heart: and he knows it. He wouldn't live where there are no Churches: he couldn't endure it. The Church stands for every possible moral principle: the Church is set against everything that is wrong in word and act—aye, it goes back to the thoughts and intents of the heart and would cleanse every impulse there. And there is no institution in this world, outside of the Church or church influence, that thus arrays itself against everything that is wrong and stands steadfast for everything that is right. Whatever moral principle there is in world governments or world societies, the Church has put it there. And the man who denies it is woefully ignorant of a truth that is as evident as the cloud and the heat, or he is a hardened hypocrite. And the world is full of that kind of hypocrites. As a matter of fact, I meet more world hypocrites than church hypocrites.

2. How is it that people do not discern the times? How is it that they are so wise in worldly things and so ignorant about churchly things? How does it come that men pride themselves in some world usage; but if the Church should adopt a like usage, they would condemn it? If the Church should do as the world does, the very same men would call it narrow and heartless and bigoted—controlled by a mean, selfish, sectarian spirit?

(a) The man of the world would like to be considered broad in his interpretation of things that enter into daily life. And nowhere is he so emphatic as when he talks along religious lines. He would break down all differences: he would convert doctrines into sapless, senseless platitudes. To him, the divisions in the Church are all traceable to the Dark Ages—which is absolutely false, and only emphasizes his sublime ignorance. Does he mean what he says: Or is he a hypocrite? In either event, he does not read aright the signs of the times.

If he is an honest man, will he come down to the methods of the man who is not honest? The doctrine of good business is honest weight, honest measure, honest wares. If one man, in his line of business-life, gives light weight, short measure, or defective wares, will the man of sound business principles say, These things go back to the Dark Ages: we live in modern times: we dare not quarrel over trifles. Will he do it? If he does, he is a scoundrel from the hand clear back to the heart. And yet, such men expect the orthodox Churches to ignore their fundamental principles, in order to put themselves on a footing with Churches that garble the Bible, deny Christ, and declaim against every principle that deals with God's saving grace. They have business sense and sight; but they lack the sense to use their sight in treating with the great principles of faith and life.

(b) A second case in point which fits in at this particular time. "We are all aiming for the same place": "Get together, you church people": "Drop your differences": "It is only the preachers that are keeping the people apart." I hear that kind of twaddle till I am heartily tired of it. If people have no principles, they have no excuse for keeping up separate Churches. But if they have principles, it would be treason to forsake them. "Get together; drop your differences!" Let us put our political parties to the same test. We are all committed to good government: we all want it. If the government is one; if our spirit of loyalty is one; if we are all working for good government, and nothing else: why are we, as a nation, split up into so many political parties? If the Republicans have a big mass meeting, will they invite a Democrat to address it? If the Democrats have a big mass meeting, will they invite a Socialist to address it? They draw the line close; they condemn each other's policies; they lampoon each other's candidates; they will throw mud at each other from nomination

day till they cast their votes. Loyal men, every one of them—working for good government! And then, if the pastor of their Church proposes to do his work without mixing in with other Churches, they will set him down as a narrow bigot. They can discern the political times; and they act in view of it—with good conscience, let us hope. And can they not give the poor preacher the credit for acting from conviction and with good conscience, when he carries on the work of his Church independent of those who have a different doctrine and practice? After all, it seems to me that the Church has some rights that even politicians are bound to respect.

(c) The signs of the times! Let me cite, in brief, a few more cases. And let me emphasize this one point: What I have already said, or am about to say, is not a criticism upon the things I cite—although there might be more or less room for it: they are introduced merely to illustrate the thought that men are prone to blame the Church for the very things they tolerate in themselves and practice in their world-life. I want to show that the same men who study the times and govern themselves by so-called good practical sense, deny to the Church the same privilege.

This old town is full of lodges: we have them on every side. They are building magnificent Homes—fine gathering places for kindred spirits. Why don't they get together and form one great Lodge? Why do not the smaller ones disband and unite with the larger ones? They won't do it? And yet these very men—some of them—are forever finding fault with the Churches for not combining their interests and massing themselves into one. Some of these societies have a ritual, with a burial service. They have a right to it: the right or wrong of it is not the question here. But this is the point: Would one order bury a member of some other order? Would they use their ritual at an outsider's grave? You never heard

the like of it. But these same men would be shocked if a Protestant minister should refuse to bury some one who was not a member of his particular Church: they would hold up their hands in holy horror at the thought. The Roman Catholic Church, be it said to her credit, buries no one who is not a baptized member of the same. The Greek Church has a like practice. And no secret society would violate its rules and do it. And why the great mass of people should look upon the Protestant Churches as a sort of religious annex to an undertaking establishment, is a profound mystery to me. One case more. I can remember when the robe was not worn in the most of our Protestant pulpits. And I have known men to leave the Church because the pastor introduced it. I venture the assertion that in churches where the robe is not worn, right here in this city, if the minister should wear one, some of the members would fly into a rage; and the preacher would have to drop it, or they would leave. And yet, these same men belong to societies where the officers, at least, are rigged out in special robes: and they take great pride in it. I could go on, by the hour, and cite instance after instance of world usage which men not only tolerate but in which they find their chief delight; but if the Church would do the same, they would scowl, and scold about its formalism, its narrow uncharitable spirit, its adherence to rites and ceremonies that find their basis in the Bible and are sanctified by time.

I have cited these instances as illustrative of the leading thought of the text: men can discern worldly things and give them their proper worldly estimate; but they fail to see how the same principle applies to church doctrine and practice. They will not discern the religious signs of the times. What remains for us? To set ourselves right, and to interpret aright the every-day earth-issues. And then, wherever we find an eternal principle, let us not expect, as a matter of course, that the world

will stand by it, and then insist upon the Church departing from it. Let us follow world-principles to their root source, and if that source is what it should be, let us shape our world-conduct according to it. And in like manner and degree, let us follow church principles and practices to their root source; and if we find them bedded in the Bible, with Christ as their life, let us be manly enough and courageous enough to follow them out to their legitimate results. We understand world elements; let us strive to understand church elements, to the consistent shaping of our church lives.

XXIII

REPENT RATHER THAN JUDGE

Luke 13:1-5. There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilæans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

We are filled with wonder at the miracles of Christ. They are marvelous evidences of His divine nature; for when He spake, it was done: when He commanded, it stood fast. It is the appeal to the eye that impresses—a passing panorama from water to wine, from sickness to health, from demonism to discipleship, from death to life: in every instance, a response to His divine voice. In the miracle of nature, God turns water into wine. It is He who multiplies the loaves and fishes, so that He answers your prayers and mine, “Feed me with food convenient for me.” And in the miracle of grace, He brings men up from the death of sin to newness of life in Christ. These, however, are unseen processes: the natural eye does not see the movement—the transference from stage to stage. And so, the miracle-side of nature has no wonderment connected with it. The reality, none the less, is there.

The words of Christ, unlike His works, do not appeal to the eye. And while He spake as never man spake, the average hearer is scarcely conscious of it. If, however, we follow Jesus from place to place, hear His answers to

the great questions of life, note how quickly He replies to His enemies and how completely He silences them: if we study His method of meeting all kinds of statements of fancy or fact, and how He draws the proper moral in every instance and drives it home to His hearers' hearts, we are impressed by the fact that His words as well as His works are full of miracle. And of this, the text furnishes a striking example.

1. We have, in the first place, the incidents of the text. There are two cases of death by violence. We find no record of either of these in the Scriptures. The first case, of course, could not be recorded in Scripture, for it was a matter of recent occurrence. It would seem that certain Galilæans had come down to Jerusalem to take part in some of the stated feasts; and while they were in the Temple, offering their sacrifices, the soldiers of Pilate slaughtered them in that holy place—the greatest indignity and disgrace that could be put upon it. The heathen temples were places of refuge: the horns of the altar of God's House secured the life of him who sought safety there. There have been instances in the history of the Christian Church when soldiers were ordered to slay the preacher in the pulpit: they would absolutely refuse to do it, because they would do no violence to the sacred office or the consecrated place.

While there is no record of this particular instance, there are cases of a like nature. At one time, the Roman soldiers were sent into the Temple, and they slew three thousand men while they were engaged in offering sacrifice. It is supposed by some that these Galilæans, who were a turbulent people, had refused to acknowledge the Roman Government; and for that reason Pilate ordered this slaughter in the Temple. It may be, too, that it was either the cause or the result of the quarrel between Herod and Pilate. In any event, we may set it down as an historic fact—something which had just happened; and the

report of it was brought to Christ. And they had a special reason for telling Him about it—a reason which His answer suggests,, and which we shall consider at the proper time.

And now, right upon this report of violence, Jesus cites a case of accident. The language implies that the case was a well known one: it had happened to people who dwelt in Jerusalem. The Pool of Siloam was near by, with its magnificent porches: and this is commonly supposed to have been the place of the accident. All this, however, is only a matter of conjecture. But that does not affect the fact. There have been great poets, great statesmen, great men in almost every walk of life, whose birth-place and birth-date are only matters of conjecture; but what they did and how they did it are certified facts: there is no dispute about it. And so, while we do not know just when this happened, or what the circumstances, the very fact that Christ refers to it as something of which they had knowledge, in order that He might make plain the truth He taught, convinces us that He is dealing with something that actually took place. In any event, it serves the purpose of giving point to His argument and the inference based upon it. And that is what concerns us the most.

2. Jesus takes these two cases, the one in which certain men lost their lives by violence, the other where death came by accident, and He gets a searching question out of each—a question which, no doubt, drove straight home to the thoughts of the hearts of those who told the distressing tale: “Do you suppose,” said He, “that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they suffered such things?” “Do you imagine that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?” And that is the question which Jesus has put to you and me more than once in our little life-time. What answers

have we given? What answer do we give when violence or accident has taken a life?

If these two questions were put in positive, abstract form, this is about what they mean: Do not judge; do not condemn; do not criticize; above all, do not think evil in your hearts. "Why think ye evil in your hearts?" That is the pointed question Christ put to His enemies: He puts the same question to you and me. These men who came to Jesus and told Him about this deed of violence, must have regarded it as a judgment. And He reproves them for it. He tells them, in substance, that they have no right to imagine that they have suffered because they were sinners above everybody else. And then He cites another case—one of accident: and He tells them that here again they have no business to judge. Judgment belongs to God, who sees thoughts and motives and desires, and who measures them aright. He sees the cause: while poor mortal eyes can see only the effect.

This is not merely the sin of some old Pharisee: this is the sin that the most of us are prone to indulge; and some people actually glory in it—it furnishes them their chief delight. If a man dies by violence, everybody is imagining the providential cause: they seem to think that God is after him and has overtaken him at last. It is heathenish to think such a thought. There is an island named Malta. In early times, a barbarous people dwelt there. It was on this island that the ship was wrecked which was taking Paul a prisoner to Rome. The season was cold, and they kindled a fire. The Apostle gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire; and as he did so, a viper came out of the heat and fastened on his hand. And when those barbarians saw it, they said among themselves, "No doubt, this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." We expect such things from barbarous people; but shall not Christians live on a loftier plane? And

yet, is it not a fact that when some distressing accident happens, we get very wise about it and we are sure that it is a special judgment? It is this spirit that Christ here reproves. And we shall do well if we catch the warning of His voice. What right have we to sit down and mumble among ourselves about the "awful visitation," the "terrible judgment," when God alone knows what lies back of it? Why are we thinking evil in our hearts when thoughts of pity and mercy and grace should occupy our minds? Why do we see evil in every mysterious outcome, unless evil is the controlling power in our inward parts? You know it, as well as I do, that the person that is always suspecting everybody else, is the very person whom we are compelled to watch the most. And you know, as well as I do, that the person who sees the possible evil side of every act, must have an evil heart to imagine it. For it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh: it is out of the heart that come the issues of life.

3. Jesus takes these two questions, the one that tells of violence and the one that speaks of accident, and He weaves them into a lash which He lays upon the backs of these ungracious people. He says that the great question is not with reference to those men who died by violence or accident: what about yourselves? He would find in these two instances, not a question as to God's judgment, but a call to repentance. They are to look away from the horrible crime and the distressing accident and the probable reason for the visitation upon those poor lives; and they were to look down into their own hearts to learn the true state there, and to repent of it. With them, the question should have been, not, What about those poor creatures, but what about themselves. And that is just where we come upon the scene: that is where we must find ourselves.

There is sickness and death in the home, there is a

distressing accident; and the mourners go about the streets. Take the death column, the accident column, the misfortune column, out of our daily papers—to say nothing of the column of crime—and there would be but little left. And as we sit down and read it and moralize about it, we seldom weave ourselves into the account. If we happen to be acquainted with some of the people, we know why they suffered; we see what is back of the mysterious providence. And if we don't see it, we suspect it. But we never think for a moment of ourselves. And yet, that is the spirit which Christ here reproves. He seems to say, Look to yourselves; look into your own hearts, and repent! Aye, that is the point to which we should come. We should realize that it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. And then, instead of trying to fathom the evil that is in other people's hearts when some calamity sweeps down upon their homes, to look deeply into our own hearts and thank the Lord that He has spared us, while others have suffered who are just as good as we are. And then, with truly repentant hearts, we should confess:

“Lord, should Thy judgments grow severe,
I am condemned, but Thou art clear.”

If the goodness of God leads to repentance, surely the severity of God should drive us to repentance. And that is the thought here. The very fact that we see evil back of accident, or vice back of violence, shows how corrupt our hearts must be. And this should lead us to smite our breasts, as did that other penitent, and cry out in agony of spirit, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” It puts, as it were, an object lesson of our soul's estate right before our eyes. It empties our hearts, in our very presence, of the poisonous dregs that are settled there; and all the foulness and filth which they cherish, are brought directly under our gaze. What vile things we harbor there! And it sometimes takes life about us to reveal it.

4. And now, when the word "repent" stirs our spirits, the Master couples it with another word which strikes terror to the soul: it is the word "perish." "I tell you," said He, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He turns their story of a crime which someone else had committed against people of another province, into a moral for their own lives. If physical death comes because of social or physical conditions into which men are brought in the common course of events, what will not come to them if they break God's commandments; if they move on reckless as to results; if they do despite to the Spirit of grace? These men, in comparative innocence, had suffered death by violence or accident: what of them if they set themselves up deliberately against the Lord and His Christ? I tell you, the men who came to Jesus to peddle a little news, with a grudge in their hearts, or something worse, must have gone away with a sting set there which would give them neither rest nor peace till they came to repentance.

And if we do not learn the lesson they were taught, we must realize that we are constantly asking questions ourselves in the place of these men who came to Christ: we have expanded this text to no purpose. We must put in our hearts, which are the proof of our own sinful estate. We must realize the sin of drawing evil inferences, when the only occasion for it is our own corrupt thought. And when Christ, by His Spirit, has made plain to us the sinfulness of such conduct, we should repent in sackcloth and ashes, and confess with the Psalmist, what we so often sing in our service, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."

And the more so, since we know that those who do not

repent shall perish. There is no doubt about it: God's Word declares it. And our own hearts tremble at the thought. Let us, then, set a watch upon our lips and a guard at the gate of our hearts, so that we think evil of no one, nor put wickedness into our words by the very questions we raise. In too many cases, the evil we imagine of others is the evil that rules in our own hearts. And so, in our wise utterances with respect to others, we are simply laying bare the state of our own hearts. And that accords with what Christ says, "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned."

XXIV

LOST AND FOUND

Luke 15:11-24. A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

The tender compassion of Christ: nothing can measure it. It is infinite, because He is infinite. The Scribes and Pharisees had murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." He did not consume them in His wrath, according to their merit. He did not even meet them with sharp rebuke. He told them the story of the lost sheep and of the lost coin—parables of active interest and love, parables of search made and dangers met. And the application in each case is unmistakable.

The next parable is that of the lost son. It completes the list: it brings the issue straight home to their hearts.

In the whole range of classic literature, there is nothing more beautiful than this parable. The story is such a simple one: it fascinates; it entrances; it holds the interest. It never jars the senses. The thought, the word, the act: each is true to life. In the depths of our conscious selves, we assent to it. It is the mirror of nature: we see our own natural hearts there. And we bow our heads in confusion and shame, and confess it. Let us now look at ourselves in the glass of this parable. And may the sight stir up some penitent thought whose end is peace.

1. "A certain man had two sons." It is the younger upon whom our interest centers at this time. He came to his father and said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." The claim is an unnatural one: it marks the spirit of a false independence. The father has nothing that the son does not have: that is true of every true home life. And the true enjoyment of the father's substance is right in the father's house. And what an abundance is there for pure pleasure! The earth was made and furnished for human happiness. Its material substance, its moving creatures: these are designed to minister to man's comfort as well as to the joys of life. The endowments of our nature are all but infinite. The senses are the avenues through which nature pours the purest delights; and mind and heart gather them, and feast upon them, and are satisfied with these rich provisions of the Father's love and grace. And it is only the lustful heart, the lawless heart, that wants to break away from the restraints of the home. The restraints of the Home: there is no such thing in God's House, and there should be none in yours and mine. There is no restraint to do what is right. There is no restraint to the exercise of the graces of the Spirit. There is no restraint to the temperate use of anything that God has

put in this earth for our enjoyment. There is no restraint except where there is evil indulgence or over-indulgence. And when the young man says, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me," it is evident that he is bent on giving himself to a riotous life. The only true life is the home life—the life in the heavenly Father's House: all else is artificial and false.

2. And now, this young man, with a feverish notion of independence, gathered up his share of the estate, took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living. It was the only logical outcome. He had said, in simple fact, I will be my own master: I will see life and enjoy it: I will give myself to revelries far distant from my father's house. And now, let us take stock, for a moment, of his share in the estate. He gathered all together: he took with him the very things he had in his father's house. There were the same beauties of nature; there were the same natural senses to drink them in and satisfy the taste. He had just exactly what he had before: the same possessions, the same avenues for their enjoyment. But there was no restraint to his appetite: the wholesome influence of the home, the sane rule of the home—these were lost. And he gave loose rein to unbridled lust. In leaving his father's house, he left his father's love; he left his father's fostering care. He did worse: he left his conscience—at least he tried to do it; he left every manly impulse; he left all temperate habits: he left everything that puts a pure zeal into the enjoyments of life and that blocks the way to all immoderate as well as all immoral indulgence. The bad which he could not do, with good conscience, under his father's eye, he now indulges to the basest limit. The good which he had enjoyed in moderate measure, he now consumes in mad revelries. He has the same senses that he had before; he has the same abundance that he had before: but the manner of their use, the purpose of their use, the

measure of their use, mark the moral difference. The one is the moderate use of God's gifts in the father's house: the other is the immoderate use of God's gifts far from the father's house in wicked debaucheries.

3. The tax of sin consumes human substance. The price men pay for wicked lust, the awful price! The money-price is the smallest part. It is too small, in a comparative sense, to mention here. The man spent all the home supplies: and then came a famine—a distressing famine with its distressing want. What a picture we get here! He left his father's house, a free-born child there; he joined himself to a heathen as a slave; and he lived and ate with swine. Life outside of the Father's House is slave life. Feasts outside of the Father's House are slave feasts and swine feasts. There are two words here which we should brand upon our minds and hearts: Famine and Want. It is the curse of every God-forsaking, God-despising life. It is the curse of every riotous life. The man who gives himself over to unrestrained indulgence, dries up the very springs of true enjoyment. He blunts his appetite and blurs his brain, so that he suffers a most distressing famine. The man of miserly habits gets no true enjoyment out of the money he clutches. He grasps and gets, he feasts on it; but his hunger increases and his soul famishes. O the hungry look that stares from the miser's eyes! The man who becomes the slave of drunken or gluttonous habits, eats and drinks, and drinks and eats; while the famine consumes his inward parts. There is the same abundance on every side. He fills himself with drink; but the thirst abides: it burns with a vehement desire and nothing can quench it. He eats, but without enjoyment, without the assuagement of the hunger that gnaws at the vital parts: tasteless as husks is everything he touches, like the disgusting mess that the swine trample under foot. It is a horrible picture of the soul's estate as it wanders away from the Father's House and seeks

in far-away world retreats to satisfy its lust with worldly pleasures. The heart hunger, the soul famine: and the filthy husks the world offers to satisfy it!

4. God created man in His own image. The likeness is a moral one: its prime feature is conscience. It never deserts the man, though the man may try to desert it. He may smother it; he may chain it; he may enslave it; but he cannot quite kill it. There is, what we might call, the sensitive chord of conscience. It takes a certain tone, a certain touch, to cause it to vibrate. The most hardened criminal has been softened by a child's voice. The most depraved have been brought to the longing for a better life, when the word "mother" sounded in their ears. The remembrance of child-life has sometimes quickened the noblest impulses in the vilest hearts. For memory is the handmaid of conscience. And memory is persistent. And so, the prodigal came to himself: memory blazed its way through the dark recesses of his hardened heart; and conscience followed it. He came to himself. He saw his real plight; he remembered the abundance of his father's house; and he resolved to act. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." It took a stroke to bring him to repentance—the pinching want. What of it, since it brought the man to his knees! The memories of home—the sweet remembrance: what heart is not touched by it! The selfish, self-willed spirit is gone. There is no merchandising here—no material gain in thought. The man recognized sin to be at the bottom of all his woe. And that sin is stripped of all circumstances. He stands out naked and alone. "God" is the man's first thought. So like the Psalmist, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." Every sin is, primarily, an insult to God: we cannot escape the issue. The

person wronged takes second place. The person wronged is, at most, intermediate—a sort of material medium through which men revile God and blaspheme His holy name. Joseph had the right conception when he was tempted to deeds of shame: “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!” And no repentance, on our part, is true, which does not begin there. Only when we are awake to the fact that, whatever our sin may be, it brings us into fellowship with swine; only when we have learned to loathe the filthy husks of a godless life: only then will our hearts yearn after the old companionship in our Father’s House, and drive us in penitence there.

5. And so, the prodigal “arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” The love, the tender pity, of the true father-heart! He did not have to knock at the door of his father’s house to waken his forgiving grace. The first far-off movement in the direction of home sent the father with the welcome of a father’s love. It reminds us of the tender appeal of Christ, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” And now the rejoicing is as great as the sorrow had been before. What a weight it must have put upon the father’s heart to hear that rude demand, “Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” It was not parting with the treasure that broke his heart: it was the abuse of that treasure. It was more: it was the fact that the very treasure which he had gathered for his son’s comfort and support, should become the unholy instrument for that son’s sin and shame. And now, the joy that his son was coming home! The inheritance all gone—what cared he for the perishable treasure that had turned his boy into a beast: the joy that filled the father-heart that the son

has left the carnival of shame and has returned in the lowly spirit of the truly penitent! It was the crowning happiness of his life: no wonder he made a feast and gladdened his heart with music and dance!

And now, shall we not find ourselves here? Have we not seen ourselves at every turn in this parable? For it is a parable of life—every repentant life. Two thoughts, in particular, I should like to impress upon your minds and hearts. The first is suggested by that scene where the prodigal son recalled the abundance of his father's house. It was this that started him on the homeward course. I venture to say that there is a prodigal chapter to every life. It may be that you and I never got so low that we were housed with swine. But all God-forgetfulness, as good old Augustine suggestively puts it, is wandering into a far country: and he spoke from his heart; for he had his share of it. And must we not confess that there have been times when God was not in all our thoughts? And what brought us to our senses? What was it but our Baptismal covenant: the pledge of our sonship; the knowledge still deep in our hearts that we were bound to our heavenly Father in the fellowship of love through Jesus Christ? And the confidence that He was waiting our return to give us a Father's embrace! And that is the one comfort we have when we see the young wandering away from the Church of Christ. Some day, they will hunger and faint. Some day, they will grow weary of their empty, frivolous, wicked life. Some day, they will turn in loathing from the husks and the swine. Some day, the desire will spring up in their hearts to return to their early church-life and their early church-love. And then they will come back; and they will find the Church with outstretched arms, waiting to welcome them to her embrace. And what a happy moment that will be? Let us pray God to send a famine to the heart of every prodigal that has wandered from their church-

home, so that they may be led to renew the fellowship which they left and find new joy in it.

The second thought is this: We know by sad experience that every evil desire, every unholy purpose, every unlovely act, marks our separation from our Father's House and the entrance upon a riotous life. And we realize in our hearts that every noble sentiment, all sorrow for sin in its essence, is a movement from the far country to our old Home. The thought that God waits for us, that He gives the Father-kiss before we have even sought His pardoning grace, enables us to put on courage and to prostrate ourselves in penitence at His feet. For it is the goodness of God that leads to repentance.

Let us find ourselves, then, in this parable—not only in our wanderings away from our Father's House, but especially in our return to His blessed embrace. And may we so seek His presence, and find it, that we may never be tempted to wander again from the bosom of His love.

XXV

THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:47-57. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

The great discourse on the Bread of Life is the turning-point in the history of Christ. It was a doctrinal test: and the people could not stand it. The parables, the miracles, the loaves and fishes; the words that touched upon the outer life, the works that affected the physical nature: these stirred the multitude to praise. But when the issue became a doctrinal one and startling mysteries marked it, they lost all interest, and lapsed into indifference, and fell away into their old manner of life.

It is human nature; and we are full of it. The pressure of a doctrine: most people will not stand it. The graphic sketch of Bible incident, the picture of a life with a thrill to it, the moral that fits everywhere; like the loaves and fishes, the multitude will crowd around to eat it. It furnishes a sort of intellectual feast; it quickens a

sentiment that satisfies: and that is what most people crave. But the doctrine that probes the heart, the doctrine that lays bare each native impulse, the doctrine that threatens the doom of death and shuts off all human escape, the doctrine that points out one way of life and none else: it is quite too narrow for this broad age. And yet, truth is a straight line, and a mighty narrow one. Depart from it an hair's breadth, and all is false. In work-life, in trade-life, in home-life: the least theft is theft, the least impurity is impure, the least lie is lie: everybody is willing to admit it. But when it comes to the foundation principle of eternal life, they rebel against it. The truth none the less stands fast. There are a thousand paths to death; there is only one into life. And that is a personal one: it is He who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." And He said it the night He went forth to die.

We find the roots of the text back in the charge which Jesus made against the multitude that had followed Him for the sake of the loaves and fishes. It was then He spoke of that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. And when He demanded faith in Him whom God had sent, true to their nature they insisted upon a sign to prove that God had sent Him. Their fathers had eaten manna in the wilderness: God had given it to His people by the hand of Moses. And then they seem to have paused, with the implied thought, "What kind of manna do you give?" It was at this point that Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the Bread of Life. He is the true heavenly manna: by faith, men become partakers of His life. And now comes the broad statement of the first verse of the text, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life."

There are three distinct stages in the text, with a central verse to mark each part. And they are on the ascending scale. They are more: they are cumulative; they multiply mysteries; they reach the highest possible

point. Accept the first, and you adopt the last. Doubt the first, and you deny the last. There is no room for any half measure here.

1. Here is the first central statement: "This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." Jesus had been very patient with these people. He had said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." How could they believe it when they had the earth-conception of His life? And so they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He saith, I came down from heaven?" They saw only the physical side of His life—the earthly, family part. And with their faces set steadfastly there, they could not get the heavenly attitude.

"Jesus the son of Joseph": the premise is false; and that is why their conclusion is false. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. His birth was a supernatural one: it was out of the course of nature. If we start at that point, there is no mystery in all His earthly life that is not in fullest harmony with it. If we stumble at that point, we shall reject every other mystery that Scripture records relative to His earthly estate. The Church stands or falls upon the doctrine of the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ. The whole trouble, here, started at that point.

The unbelief of our times: what begets it? It is that phase of modernism that denies all mysteries, inclusive of all miracles. And how does it meet these direct claims of Christ? It makes short work of it: it throws the whole Gospel of St. John out of the Bible: and that settles it. And whatever of the other Gospels it cannot throw out, it edits and interprets. If only these men would be honest. If only they would come out fair and square, and say, "We are not Bible disciples; we are free moralists," every

one would take them at their own estimate, and they would get no more following than a Buddhist priest. But they use just enough of the Bible to deceive the innocent and the unsuspecting; they attack it just enough to tickle the worldly wise; and they assume, in either case, such a lofty moral and intellectual tone as, at times, to deceive the very elect. Let me assure you that he who is deceived thereby is not wise.

If we cannot take Jesus Christ at His word, whom shall we believe? He says, "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." He says, "This is the Bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." And now, the question becomes personal with you and me, Shall we partake of it and live? Shall we refuse to partake of it and die? Life and death, heaven and hell, hinge upon our attitude. As we stand beneath the shadow of the Cross, which shall we choose? There is the psychological moment in every life: we dare not do violence to it; we dare not spurn it. And if there is one within the sound of my voice who wavers or doubts or denies, it may be his last chance to make his calling and election in Christ Jesus sure. Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart.

2. The next central statement carries with it two additional thoughts. Jesus says, "I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." He here defines the bread: "My flesh," He calls it. And then the whole world is included in the gift. No wonder the Jews strove among themselves and said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

We must bear in mind that when Christ spake, the Cross was not far distant. And then He would give His flesh. It is significant that He does not use the word

“eat,” but the word “give.” It was the Jews, who interpreted His speech; and when He said, “I will give My flesh,” they inquired among themselves, “How can He give us His flesh to eat?” For the moment, let us retain the word “give”—the word that Jesus uses. He gave His life: it was a voluntary surrender on His part. A little later, He said, “I lay down My life: no man taketh it from Me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” He said to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.” There He stood, Almighty to live; Almighty to give His life; Almighty to retain it. And it was His free choice to give His life.

And then comes that second point: He gave His life for the life of the world. It was an infinite sacrifice: it was an all-atoning sacrifice. And anything short of it would have been unworthy of Jesus Christ. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” By the grace of God, He tasted death for every man: no one is shut out by an absolute decree from His kingdom of grace.

“And everyone His grace may prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.”

The Jewish conception, however, was that the Messiah should save none but the Jewish race. And there are still those who would limit His saving merit to chosen ones who were predestinated to share it. “The World,” says Christ. The grace of Christ throughout this sin-cursed globe: the universality of it! And if any man fails or falls short of it, it is not God’s fixed decree that cuts him off: it is the perverseness of his nature. And to all such people Jesus says, “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.” The universality of God’s grace in Christ is distinctly declared everywhere in the Gospel mes-

sage. And here, before He goes to the Cross, He proclaims it. His life the all-atoning sacrifice; the world, in all time and every place, the object of His redeeming love: the glory it gives to His name, the comfort it brings to our hearts! It declares, at once, His praise and our peace.

And the fact that it is universal implies that no one can dispense with it. If it were only for the Jews, it would be fair to infer that the Gentiles did not need it. But since He gave His life for the world and His disciples were commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature, the world needs it, the world could not do without it; and whosoever will be saved, must be saved by it. And this actual universality in purpose implies the possible universality in effect. It therefore demands the universality of effort. It is here where we find the chief incentive to all mission enterprise. The sacrifice of Christ necessitates, on our part, the sacrifice for Christ.

3. The third central statement, or series of statements, was forced upon Jesus by the Jews themselves. He had said, "The bread which I will give is My flesh." And they raised the question among themselves, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" He accepts their interpretation and applies it, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life." Jesus, you see, adopts the word which they read into His statement and bases His argument upon it.

"How can this man give His flesh to eat?" The word "eat" has a general sense as well as a specific one. Sick-ness eats out the life: the sea eats away the shore: taxes are sometimes said to eat up the rents. And the Psalmist says, "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge: who eat up my people as they eat bread?" The word "consume," or "destroy," expresses the thought in each case.

It was the thought of Christ when He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." How, then, did they eat His flesh? Not in any animal sense; but by sending Him to the Cross: there they ate out His life. That is the outward, physical sense.

But there is an inward spiritual sense. Jesus says, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life." He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him." There is more than the crucifixion implied here: the crucifixion, in itself, was not unto life. It did not save Judas; it did not save Pilate; it did not save the Scribes and Pharisees who drove Him to the Cross, nor the soldiers who nailed Him there. The physical act of destroying His bodily life—eating up His flesh by the Cross—had no saving power, no saving effect. And so, when Jesus says, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me," the act must be understood to be a spiritual one. It means, to be specific, that the whole Christ, human and divine, must enter into our lives. It means that the entire Christ, human and divine, must be received into our hearts, appropriated there, assimilated there. And this involves a mystical union which makes Him, by the processes of grace, a vital part of our spiritual life: just as the bodily eating of flesh makes it, by the processes of nature, a vital part of our physical life. It was this thought—the deep consciousness of the fact—that impelled St. Paul to write, "I live; yet not I: Christ liveth in me." And above all, it is a sublime figure of that great succeeding fact when He instituted the Holy Supper, declaring the real presence of His undivided and indivisible nature, the Human and the Divine, and imparting Himself, in the fulness of His two natures, in that sacred Feast. The complete appropriation of Christ—the life sacrificed upon the Cross, body and blood given there;

the life transmitted through the Gospel of grace, body and blood presented there; the life communicated in the Holy Sacrament, body and blood imparted there; the whole Christ at every stage, in a way peculiar to it: such is the plain teaching of Scripture; and such is the confident assurance it creates in our hearts.

The bread from Heaven, in the person of Jesus Christ; the Bread of Heaven, given for the world, and not for a part of the race; the Bread of Heaven, eaten when His life ebbed upon the Cross, apprehended when men lay hold of Him by Faith, and assimilated when they receive Him into their heart of hearts: this constitutes the mystical union of the Christ-life with our life; this is the consummation of His earthly estate.

XXVI

NATURAL SIGHT AND SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

John 7:33-36. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles? teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

It would seem that Jesus lived in a murmuring age and among a murmuring people. The time was one of great unrest. And there was occasion for it. The yoke of Rome was upon God's chosen race: and they chafed under it. The ordinances of God's House were sacredly kept; but they were hollow at heart. And when Jesus came and brushed aside formalities, He set the nerves of the Pharisees on edge: it offended their fine taste. And so, there were constant disagreements and disputes. The age was ripe for revolution in Church and State: there were troubles on every side. The text introduces one of these scenes of charge and countercharge, which were so common when Jesus met His enemies and was drawn into dispute.

The stress and strain of the times are telling on our nerves. (We are fed on munitions and U-boats and aeroplanes and powder-plants—perfect magazines of war supplies; and it takes a very small spark to make us explode. You know what I mean: I mean that these strenuous times) have stretched our nerves to the limit; and that the least friction makes us fly into a fit of murmuring and com-

plaint. The machinery of home-life, work-life, Church-life, is strained at every point: it is bound to break if this tension continues; and then the awful wreckage. What we each must do, within ourselves, is to curb our spirits; possess our souls in patience; be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: and time will smooth out the rough places and soften the hard spots and make the bitter sweet.

The priests and scribes, the Pharisees and Sadducees, were in constant strife with Christ. (They picked at His words and traced His very deeds to the devil: that were the limit of hate. The people, the honest-hearted people, heard Him gladly; and they said, "When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this man hath done?") But the men who sat in the chief seats of the synagogue and made broad their phylacteries, would have it otherwise.) So they scattered the poison of suspicion and distrust and hate: at last, they filled up the cup of their iniquity by nailing Him to the accursed tree. They did not understand Him because they would not understand Him: sin and self ruled their hearts.

The words of Christ, as recorded in the text, are as plain as plain can be. When He says to His enemies, "Yet a little while am I with you; and then I go unto Him that sent Me. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come," we know what He means: He means that the day of His ascension is not far distant. But the Jews said among themselves, "Whither will He go, that we shall not find Him? Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" They saw only the natural man, and they could see nothing beyond the natural life. And that fact suggests some very interesting thoughts.

1. An external knowledge deals only with externalities: it cannot penetrate the hidden parts. These Scribes and Pharisees knew Jesus' name and face; but they did not know the Christ. They saw the humanity of His life; but

the divinity was hid from their eyes. It was not His fault: it was their own perverseness that made them blind as to His divine nature. He moved, day after day, in their midst; He spake as never man spake; He performed miracles, and they were compelled to acknowledge it; His life was pure and perfect; He challenged men to show that there was the least stain of sin upon it: and yet they denied the Holy One and the Just; they asked that a murderer be set free.

It is this outward, superficial knowledge that settles, like a frost, upon the Church of Christ. The men who are hostile to the deity of Christ, are hostile to Christ. They read of His Virgin-birth; but they deny it. They read of His miracles; but they deny the possibility of miracles. They read of His resurrection; but they deny that He arose. They read of His ascension; but they claim there is nothing to it. They are brought face to face with Christ in the Scriptures just as surely as these Jewish people were in physical fact; but they push it all aside as the impossible. And that settles it. And they point with pride to the large list of great men who did not believe that Jesus was divine.

And right here lies one of the greatest fallacies of the age. It is the shallowest kind of sophistry to argue that because Voltaire and Tom Paine and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and a host of other leading lights along their special lines, either denied outright or were silent as to the deity of Christ, therefore Christ was not divine. It is the most senseless argument ever put up by a man who pretends to be sane. If you should break your ankle, would you send for the Chief Justice of the United States to come and set it? If you were on trial for your life, would you want Thomas Edison to plead your case? If you wanted a tooth pulled, would you let an editor try his hand at it? And if you would know the truth as it is in Jesus, will you go to men who know nothing about

Him beyond the moral of His life? Why are not men honest? If they deal with astronomy, they will quote every great astronomer of this and every other age. If they deal with medicine, they will quote every man who has ever been prominent along medical lines. If it is a question of Law, they will quote the great jurists. If, however, it is a question of theology, they will quote men great in medicine, great in jurisprudence, great in politics, great along some other line of life; but there will not be a great theologian in the list. They never quote the Apostles, or the Church Fathers of the early age. They never quote Luther or Calvin or Wesley or Knox or Krauth or Hodge. The men they quote know Christ only from the outside—just like the Scribes and Pharisees—with a great prejudice as to His inner life.

And that is where these men who criticize the orthodox Churches are either supremely ignorant or brazenly dishonest. They are well aware of the fact that no man is considered an authority outside of the line along which he is a specialist. And yet, they go outside of Bible specialists to bolster up their unbiblical theories. And then they make the boast: See what an array of great men deny the deity of Jesus Christ! Let us not be misled by these modern Scribes and Pharisees, who see only the human side of Christ's life, but are blind as to the divine. As in the days of St. Paul, professing to be wise, they make fools of themselves; and they try to make fools of everyone else.

2. Over against this natural knowledge of Scripture, and above it, there is a spiritual knowledge: and these Scribes and Pharisees did not have it. It is a knowledge peculiar to the new life, which sees things in their original source by spiritual insight and traces them out to their ultimate. It is like dealing with like. Just as it takes physical life to deal with physical realities; so it takes spiritual life to deal with spiritual realities. If a man,

therefore, is not a new creature in Christ, he cannot comprehend the things of Christ. Take the case of our physical natures. If a man does not possess the sense of sight, his judgment of colors would carry no weight. The same holds good in the case of every other physical sense. And can we not understand that a man must be spiritually alive, with spiritual sight and insight, in order to understand the Bible aright? World culture lacks the essential principle. It may be keen along intellectual lines, but it is deaf and dumb—aye, dead—in its relation to spiritual realities. It can never be master, therefore, when we deal with the things of the Spirit; though it may be very useful as a servant.

These Jewish people had the Old Testament Scriptures; but they rejected the Christ. They had but the outward grasp of Moses and the Prophets. The shell of truth they knew by sight; but the seed of truth had not entered their heart. For a mere knowledge of the facts of Scripture—the act of the intellect—does not enable a man to lay hold of its inner essence. To analyze food products will not build up the bodily tissue: the products themselves must enter into the physical life and become a living part of it. To analyze the teachings of Scripture will not build up the spiritual nature: it must be received into a good and honest heart. And once there, it will impart life and light. And that is where a large percentage of people fall short. They get at the Bible in every imaginable way but the right one. And then they say, We have seen Jesus: He has the same human shape; He has the same animal wants; He is just a mortal like ourselves. And wherever the miraculous enters into His life, they merely brush it aside as something unworthy of notice; for they have decided that there is no such thing as miracle.

The man who comes to Jesus as these Scribes and Pharisees came, will get the message they got: “Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, thither

ye cannot come." There is no comfort there. The man who comes to Jesus to lay violent hands on Him, will get the message they got: "Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world; ye shall die in your sins, if ye believe not that I am He." There is not much comfort there. The man who denies the deity of Christ gets the answer the Pharisees got: "Ye are of your father the devil; and the lusts of your father ye will do." And surely, there is no word of comfort there. How different is His message to those who gladly heard His voice: "I am the Light of the World; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be." And why this difference? It all depends upon the attitude. The one who sees Christ as a man, and no more, cuts himself off from the offices of Christ: there is nothing but judgment in his case. The one who sees and knows Christ as God manifest in the flesh inherits the promise.

3. We have, then, the attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees: we have also the attitude of the disciples. They all saw the same Christ: they heard the same words He spake; they beheld the same miracles. And yet, the former were His enemies; the latter dwelt in His love. Wherein lies the difference? One little word declares it. The disciples had Faith in Christ; and so they followed Him in love. These Jewish leaders had no faith in Christ; and so they pursued Him in hate.

These two classes of people are constantly in evidence: we have them at the present time—the same spirit under a different name. There are the faithful followers of Christ, who believe every word that the Scriptures record with respect to His earthly life, from the Annunciation to the Ascension. And their reward is great; for they have the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. And then there are those who doubt and

deny whatever of miracle pertains to His earthly existence. For them there remains nothing but judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. The love of Christ: O how the disciple clings to it! But let us not forget that the wrath of the Lamb is also mentioned in Scripture. Let us not forget that the same Jesus who said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"; it was He too that said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Throughout the Word of God, the two conditions are set side by side: they are treated as great eternal facts. There is no sliding scale here—no shading off between the two estates. We are either on the right hand or on the left: we either believe or we do not believe: we are either elect or reprobate: and it rests with us to settle the issue. Jesus made as great an effort to save the Scribes and Pharisees as He did to save the publicans and harlots. He taught in the Temple and synagogue, whither the Jews resort, as well as on the mountain-side or seashore, where, at times, there were none but the Twelve. On his part, Judas had as good an opportunity as James.

How is it, then, that one is taken and another is left? It rests with their own hearts. If one man goes to the Word of God and feeds on the Bread of Life, he will grow in grace; for Christ shall be formed in him the hope of eternal life. If one man goes to the Word of God and accepts only what he understands and rejects all its mysteries: if he dissects it, and analyzes it, and classifies it, and brings it under his critical gaze as he would some world science, the truth will not reach his heart with its regenerating and sanctifying might. The critic has no Christ; the scholastic has no Christ; the one who doubts and denies has no Christ: and outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire.

How, then, shall we open the Bible? To meet God there and learn His will in His laws and ordinances: to

meet Christ there and commune with Him in the fellowship of love: to meet the Spirit of grace there, so that His renewing might may be exercised on our hearts and lives. The Word is Manna from the skies: let us feed upon it, and our souls shall be blest.

XXVII

THE TRUTH MAKES FREE

John 8:31-36. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: How sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The word "Truth" has a large place in Jesus' life. It is the essential element of His nature, as love is the very essence of the divine attributes. For just as St. John says, "God is Love," so Jesus says, "I am the Truth." We are not to play the part of Pilate and treat truth as an abstract principle—as something that has small place in this practical age. Pilate made a great mistake: a man cannot sneer truth aside.

In the realm of the inanimate, everything is true to its nature. The law of gravitation, like the God who made it, has no variableness neither shadow of turning. The man who builds a wall, stone by stone, knows this fact; and he constantly uses his plumb-line so that he may build true to it. The compass points straight to the pole-star; and though the sky is set full of shining spheres, the pilot never tries to guide his ship by one of these. In the realm of the animate, everything is true to its nature. Animals and plants never change places: they each remain what they were when God first called them into being. Man may cultivate them away from their original estate, but he cannot change their nature. Everything that lives is

true to its life-principle, true to its origin, true to its species. And there is not only truth in its inward parts but in all outward development. It is the history of all animal and plant life.

As soon, however, as we enter the realm of man, which is the realm of moral life, we find it otherwise. Man was made in God's image; but he did not retain it. He sinks farther and farther away from the divine likeness and falls to the level of the brute—and even below it. He therefore is not true to the divine source whence he came. A moral agent must be a free agent: there is no morality where there is no freedom to act. And so, the Freedom of the Will is one of the essentials of all moral life. And in the freedom of his will, man departed from God's counsel and commandment. The animal, the plant—each is true to its nature; but man departed from it: he lost the heavenly part of his nature and became a slave to its earthly part. Christ came to set him free; and the truth was the agency by which He would do it. For, you know what the poet says,

"He is the Freeman whom the Truth makes free;
And all are slaves beside."

"The Truth," then, is the root-thought of the text—its power in those who accept it, the loss which comes to those who depart from it.

1. The Power of the Truth! Is there power, then, in an abstract principle? It has no power until it comes in touch with life. The power of Law: it has none until it enters into the community life. The power of the Bible: it has none as it lies on your table; but receive it into good and honest hearts, and it becomes the power of God unto everyone that believes. There is a power in every principle proportioned to the end for which God gave it and conditioned upon the fact that it be used as God designed it. And there can be no interchange: nothing

can take its place: no substitute here, much less subterfuge. A case in point: A knowledge of figures will not make a man honest. And why? Because there is no moral principle there, and consequently no moral outcome. Each truth develops along its own line: it never enters the sphere of another, except as a helpful adjunct. Just as plant grows into plant and nothing else; so mental thought develops the mental part, and moral thought the moral part, and spiritual thought the spiritual part. Men are not made Christians by studying philosophy or science or art. There is an old saying, and a true one, "Man is what he eats." The intellectual man is meant here. If he "eats" philosophy—enough of it—he will become a philosopher of some sort. The same is true of the arts and sciences—in a certain restricted sense. It may be true that "the poet is born, not made"; yet every poet reflects his environment. Dante would not be Dante without the Italy in which he lived: Milton and Burns are what they are largely because of where they were. For what is poetry but the outburst of the heart, with the native impulse to fire it and the outward circumstance to give it shape? Milton could never have written "The Cotter's Saturday Night"; nor Burns, "Paradise Lost." Each wrote the truth; it came from an outside source; it welled up from their hearts and through their hearts into the universal heart. Have thoughts like these anything to do with the text? A great deal more than we might suppose. They are germinal along intellectual lines; and we shall find their exact counterpart along spiritual lines.

(a) The Power of the Truth. Jesus had just said some wonderful things with respect to His own divine life. And as He spake, "Many," we are told, "believed on Him." "Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the Word of God." And so, the words of Jesus—which were spirit and life—put the principle of Faith into their hearts. Then said He, "If ye continue in My word, then are ye

My disciples indeed." The Truth has power to make disciples. Why, then, does not everyone who hears it become a disciple? When Christ spake to the winds and the waves, they obeyed His voice. When He spake the word of healing, men were made whole. There is not a single case on record where that which He commanded, was not done. But when He spake to the stubborn hearts of Scribes and Pharisees, they set their perverse will in opposition to His call to repentance and faith and holiness of heart; and this was His sad complaint, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." The man of un-faith, the man of false faith, will not hearken to His voice. The natural heart is harder to move than stocks and stones.

But the man into whose heart the Word of life comes, and stays—that Word, like a seed, will take root and blossom into faith; and the fruits of faith will increase. For Faith is not a dead fact: it is a living principle; and it does not rest till it reaches out into other lives. "No man liveth unto himself": he cannot do it. For better or worse, he lives in other lives. The disciple of Christ takes on trust the words of Christ. He does not doubt, for a moment, a single syllable. And why should he doubt? "I am the Truth," says Christ. He does not simply speak the truth, as you and I may speak it: truth is an essential element in His life: eternal truth is there; and it is everlastingly true. It was not simply true for His time and His race: it is true for all time and for every race. Jesus was not a passing incident in this world-age: He is from everlasting to everlasting the same; and Truth is His eternal attribute. And so if we believe the truth as He gave it, we too are His disciples.

(b) The Truth does more than make disciples: it sets men free. Such is the promise: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In the case of the true disciple, the truth has the peculiar power of

making a man understand it in essence and spirit—not a mere knowledge of the Gospel facts, but an earnest, a hearty, a whole-hearted assent to the truth which they declare. As soon, therefore, as a man begins to question the words of Christ, we know by that very fact that the roots of truth are being pulled up out of his heart and that he is becoming a slave to world-theories. The Truth sets free: free from doubt, free from denial, free from everything that does not have Christ as its heart and life. Some people talk about the slaveries of Scripture. What nonsense! It is not slavery to live an honest life, an upright life, a pure life. If only we had a little more slavery of that sort. Is God a slave because He cannot lie? Call it slavery, if you please; but know this: the strictest adherence to truth is the highest liberty of true life. The Truth makes free: free to think and do the right, and nothing else; free to scorn every evil thought and impulse, and to trample it under foot as a venomous serpent.

2. The second part of the text has, as its leading thought, "Departure from the Truth." I have already hinted at man's power of resistance. He cannot withstand the forces of nature, which are God's agents. Heat and cold, wind and wave: man is the sport of these elements. But in point of moral resistance, he measures strength with the Almighty. And so men carried out their wicked devices and crucified the Christ. But their power ended there. Man's strength and weakness: how they loom up on every side! It takes a hundred years to build an oak-tree: a man can destroy it in a minute. But he cannot restore it: he is powerless there. A man, by a brute act, can blast a precious life; but he cannot put innocency into the desolated heart. A man, by a word, can ruin his neighbor's good name; but he is powerless to undo the injury he has done. The might of a man with a wicked purpose to inspire his heart: nothing but

the grace of God can change it. And what about its wicked source? It all comes by departing from the Truth.

(a) A departure from the truth breaks the line of descent. These Jews said, "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" They were, indeed, the natural descendants of Abraham; but they were not his children by spiritual descent. Man walked with God; but as soon as he ate the forbidden fruit, he departed from the truth which God had set as the law of his life, and from that moment he became the slave of every sinful desire. The fellowship with God was destroyed; and man could not restore it. There was a chasm high as heaven and deep as hell; and man was powerless to span it. The same almighty power which, at the first, did create, must recreate. Jesus Christ by His almighty power bridged the abyss between death and life; the Holy Ghost, in the almightiness of His power, makes us new creatures in Christ. The Jewish people, by losing the Faith of Abraham, lost the Abrahamic covenant: they became children of bondage. And now the truth of Christ—the truth about Christ—is the only thing that can set them free.

It is not different in our case. If those who departed from the Faith of Abraham were cut off from Abraham's covenant, and no longer had any share in it, like the dead branches cut from the parent vine; surely we, who are not the seed of Abraham by natural descent but are Gentiles by nature: we surely were not born free. But as Abraham took God's Word as Truth—believed it and followed it; so if we accept God's Word as Truth—the whole body of Scripture of which Abraham had but a small part, simple and direct: if we believe and follow it, we are Abraham's children by spiritual descent. And if we have Abraham's faith, we shall inherit Abraham's promise.

(b) As soon as a man departs from the truth, he ceases to be free: he actually becomes a slave. We are

dealing here with the poles of thought. To break with God is to make with Satan. To drop the good is to take up the evil. If we do not believe, we doubt. If we do not assent to the doctrine of Christ, we reject it. There is no neutral ground on which to set our feet. "He that is not with Me," says Christ, "is against Me." We cannot serve God and Mammon: we cannot have our hearts set in two places at the same time: if we tell the truth, there is no lie in it: we cannot be on both sides the river at the same time: if we tell a lie, the truth is not in it.

And we cannot be bond and free at the same time. If the Son makes us free, then are we free indeed: but if not, then we are slaves. The people who deny Christ, imagine they are free: they are not bound by the Bible. What blindness of mind and heart! They are the slaves of their own thoughts, their own theories, their own philosophies. They say, "The Bible is not infallible"; but they hold to the infallibility of their own self-thought inferences. The only true freedom is the freedom which the truth gives. And there is no spiritual truth but the truth which the Holy Spirit gives. For we believe that the prophecy in old time came not by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And time, with every wicked assault from age to age, has not shaken our faith in the truth of what is embodied there.

"Truth": what else did God ever give? Go down into earth's mines: true silver, true gold, true iron, true lead: all true metals there; no counterfeits, no base substitutes. Look out over this earth: true trees, true grass, true grains: there is nothing artificial there. Search the Scriptures: they are the revelation of God's will and grace. Is there a single historic statement that is false? a single commandment that is not pure and right? Is there a single precept that is not just? a single promise that does not lift us up and set our feet in heavenly places?

And the truth of Christ—the truth that sets free; the truth that turns us from every evil way and gives us grace and strength to discard it; the truth that builds us up into a godly life and makes us rejoice in it: shall we not cherish it, and love it, and live it? To this end, it must dwell richly in our hearts and be a living principle there. Then we shall be free to do right, with the freedom in which God lives; we shall be free to hate sin, as God in His freedom hates it. There is no slavery where truth reigns supreme. The truth sets free: it is error that enslaves. Once more:

“He is the Freeman whom the Truth makes free;
And all are slaves beside.”

XXVIII

JESUS THE HOME GUEST

John 11:1-11. Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

The story of Lazarus is a most interesting one. It is a picture from home life. It was, in one sense, a sad home: father gone, mother gone; two sisters with their brother all that is left. But it had become a happy home, because Jesus was a frequent visitor there. And now a new sadness had come to it: "Lazarus was sick." And Jesus once more is their comfort and hope. Jesus the Home Guest: let us try to understand what it meant to these people; let us try to realize what it should mean in our case. To call Him; to know that He will come, that He will help, that He will save: what courage that must give in the midst of the bitter trials that are incident to all our lives!

I wish we could project ourselves into this scene—become, as it were, a living part of it. The home was like our homes; its cares and duties were the same; its

troubles and annoyances were the same; its wants the same; its sorrows the same. And so, we shall find nothing new there: it will be like stepping into a neighbor's house. It is only as we thus become a part of a scene that we get the true inner view of that which it is designed to represent. For the story is not told for History's sake: it is recorded for our sakes. And that fact furnishes the chief reason why we should study it. There is a chain of providences here: they are the revelation of the providences that are common to every Christian home.

1. I find, in the first part of the text, a loving trust. "Lazarus was sick." The sisters knew the love of Christ: they knew the nature of Christ: they knew the gift of Christ. And with a childlike trust, they sent for Him. And this was their message, "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick." There is no scene in Scripture more simply sublime. An appeal to Jesus' love: and then the plain fact that should call its almightiness into exercise. It was the logic of the heart. Jesus loved Lazarus; they loved Jesus; Lazarus was sick; and they sent the message of trust and love. The sweet simplicity that marks it!

And now, let us transfer the scene to our own home. Someone is sick there. Do we love Jesus? Jesus loves us: there is no doubt about it. Do we trust Jesus? We should, if we don't. If we do, then let us go to Him, or send for Him, and tell Him our trouble. We send for the doctor; and that is right. We hand the sick one over to his care; and that too is right. And we should just as confidently seek Jesus' presence, as did these sisters when sickness came into their home. The confiding spirit, the simple trust that when we have told Jesus the story of our sorrow or care, He will know what to do and will surely do it; the sense that He is as real to us as He was to Mary and Martha: such should be our loving, trusting attitude toward Christ. Let us cherish it and cultivate it every day of our lives.

The next verse gives us a glimpse of the inner workings of the mind of Christ. He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." In the case of these sisters, it was something quite different. They saw only the outward sorrowful side—just as we do when sickness comes into our homes. But there was a divine side, and Jesus reveals it. The Son of God would be glorified by it; and they themselves would be lifted up to a nobler spiritual plane. The divine side of sickness, of suffering, of trouble of any sort: do you suppose it was limited to the case of Lazarus and his sisters? In that event, the Evangelist would never have mentioned it. This story is told for you and me: we must read ourselves into every line. If you get sick, with the love of Christ in your heart and Christ's love for you an assured fact, then somehow God will be glorified by it. And if God's glory is a factor in our sick-hours and our pain-hours, by His grace we can not only bear it: we should glory in it. That was, in part, St. Paul's thought when he wrote, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Link the love of Christ, the power of Christ, the glory of Christ, with your sufferings and sorrows and cares, and the burden will become light: aye, more, a glory will shine through it.

2. A loving trust, then, was shown by these devoted sisters—trust in Christ: and He meets them with a loving test. The test of love! For love has its tests. As we read the verse, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus," we should suppose that He would rise up at once and hasten to their home. What were the facts? "When He had heard, therefore, that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Jesus so often did the very opposite to what we imagine He should have done. It was so here.

I often wonder how these sisters interpreted Christ's conduct. Mary, the patient one, might have endured it. But Martha, the quick, active, alert, must have been wonderfully wrought up over it. Was there reason for worryment on their part? Human reason—plenty of it. Divine reason—not a particle. Jesus loved them: they knew it. And they should have known that, in the promptings of His love, He would come at the right time. Their love for Him was of the pure spiritual type: His love for them was of the perfect divine type. Love never faileth—your love and mine—if it has a divine source. Surely Christ's love never faileth; for it comes from the divine essence. A day and a night passed, a night and a day: and yet the Master did not come. What could it mean? Aye, but that was a crucial test: who of us could stand it!

And why should we doubt? Why doubt in the midst of so many promises? When the Lord says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me": does He mean it? And can we not depend upon it? We know how it turned out in this case. Lazarus died and was laid in the grave; and yet, Jesus did not come. But when, at last, He came, what a blessed outcome! From death to life, from sorrow to joy—and God glorified by it! We get, here, the outward workings of God's providence. It brings to mind the lamentation of Jacob: "Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." In point of fact, these very things were the beginning of the brightness of Jacob's life. The loss of fortune, the loss of some precious life, the loss of fame: if we could but see the inner workings of providence, we should find them fashioning a future that shall be big with blessings, breaking over our heads like precious ointment. Let us believe the promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His

purpose." Let us believe that God is glorified when He summons one of His saints through death into life. And let us, with humble, grateful hearts, bow to the divine decree, and say, "The will of the Lord be done"—not as a cold fatalistic enactment, but as the fulfilment of a glorious hope. Let us have that supreme faith which put courage into Job's heart, as well as confidence, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

3. The loving test is followed by a loving protest, with its co-incident result. Jesus declared His purpose to go into Judea, right through the midst of His bitterest foes. He had left there because of their threatened violence: His hour had not yet come. And so His disciples said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee: and goest Thou thither again?" And now, mark His answer: "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." Are these words dark to us? They were clear to His disciples. The Jewish day was from sunrise to sunset: it was divided into twelve parts. The word "day" was also used to express a lifetime: long or short, there were twelve hours to it. The Twelve Hours of Jesus were not yet spent. As He was divine, He knew its limit. And so He had no fear as long as His Twelve Hours had not run their course. He walked in the day: He therefore walked in the light. And as long as He was in the light, He was safe. But His night came, the dark night of Gethsemane: then they took Him and bound Him and crucified Him.

We, too, have our sunrise and sunset: the birth-date a settled fact, the death-date a certain fact. It is daytime now for you and me: the night—God only knows when its shadows shall fall. If Jesus could say, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work": surely we should be

diligent so that our life-work may be well done. In our temporal life, we make provision for day and night alike: we would not live as if there were no night. And shall we not provide for the night of this life? Shall we not make our calling and election in Christ Jesus sure, so that we may have the light of life? Shall we not live that the sunset of this mortal life shall be greeted by the sunrise of that sun which never sets? I like the story of Moses—that last scene of his earthly life. He climbed to Pisgah's height; and there alone with God, he had a vision of the Canaan beyond swift Jordan's tide. And then he shut his eyes on earth and opened them on the glories of the Canaan above.

This world is dark without Christ to give it light. The dark ages were the ages without Christ: the dark continent is the continent without Christ: the dark heart is the heart without Christ. He who says, "I am the Light of the world"—He is its spiritual light. And where His light does not shine, darkness covers the land and gross darkness the people. It is the putting out of His light that causes men to stumble; it is the putting out of His light that causes nations to stumble. That is the trouble with our times. And only when the nations come out into the light, so that they see their sin and confess it—and repenting of it, depart from it—only then will the war-night be swept from our skies. It is, indeed, a time for sackcloth and ashes!

4. The text concludes with a loving promise: "He saith unto them, Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of his sleep." As a matter of fact, Lazarus was already dead: and Jesus knew it. The figure of sleep to represent death is a frequent one in Old Testament Scripture. It was not used to deceive but to typify the inward reality of a dreaded fact and to take the sting from it. It does not refer to the soul, as some foolishly suppose: the doctrine of the "soul-sleepers" has no basis

here, nor anywhere else in Scripture. The body returns to the earth whence it came; the spirit goes to the God who gave it: that is the distinct teaching of Scripture; and that is what this verse teaches. There is, moreover, a still deeper thought: it is the thought that sleep is a temporary estate, not the eternal one. And out of this fact grows the loftier thought that death is but a passing incident; that sooner or later the body shall rise, and body and soul shall enter into the eternal estate. You remember St. Paul's simple way of putting it: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." The gross, material part of the seed crumbles into dust: the germ springs into life. These bodies drop back to their kindred dust: the soul goes up to the God who gave it. It was all plain to God's people. When Jesus came to that Bethany home, Lazarus was in his grave. To Martha's sad lament, He said, "Thy brother shall rise again." And when she replied, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," this was His significant answer, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The resurrection, therefore, was believed and taught. And so, the Jews would understand Jesus when He said, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." The resurrection is an assured fact. Moreover, there are two kinds of resurrection, and we cannot debate that fact out of existence.

In His ministry, Jesus Christ did in a visible way what He now does, and will at last do, by His invisible might. He healed all manner of diseases: He does it now in answer to our prayer of faith. He raised the dead: He will do the same at the last day, when the trumpet shall

sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. And the raising of Lazarus is the prophecy of what shall be. He was brought back to temporal life—body and soul restored to the unity of their former estate: we shall be brought to eternal life—the spiritual body and soul united in their future unending estate.

Our loved ones in the grave! Tis but the mortal part that slumbers there. No wars disturb their rest: trouble and strife can neither wake them nor keep them awake. Asleep in Jesus—peaceful rest! And their souls are in that blest abode, awaiting the happy hour when body and soul shall again be one, and we shall be with them at one and in one. Let us be patient: the sands of time are running fast: for some of us, the day is far spent: our bodies and souls will soon be summoned to dwell apart, till Jesus calls our sleeping dust and bids it rise. Then we, too, shall meet Him in the air: we, too, shall mount with Him in triumph to the skies: we, too, shall enter those mansions of eternal rest and peace.

XXIX

"WE WOULD SEE JESUS"

John 12:20-26. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

The people of God's covenant divided the world into two parts, Jews and Gentiles: Greeks, the latter were commonly called. The division was not based upon culture, or commerce, or matters of state: the distinction was a religious one. Men were either in the kingdom of God or out of it: they were either Jews or Greeks. If they were not Jews by racial descent, and yet were in the Jewish Church, they were known as proselytes. The line, throughout, was a clean-cut one.

It were better if we made a like cleavage. If a man has good moral qualities, it is the custom to call him a Christian, irrespective of his attitude toward Christ. A man is either in the Church or out of it. If he is in the Christian Church, he gets the Christian name: if he is not in the Christian Church, he has no right to the Christian name. A man is a citizen of the country to which he owes allegiance: he cannot be a citizen of two nations at the same time. Jew or Greek: that was the old dividing line. Christian or worldling, one or the

other; Christian or Agnostic, one or the other; Christian or Culturist, one or the other: we cannot be both at the same time. The world distinguishes in all world alliances. No one takes the name of a nation unless he is a citizen of the same. And why should anyone be honored with the name of Christ, unless he lives in the fellowship of Christ—unless, in short, he is a member of the Communion of Saints? Let us be rational here as everywhere else.

1. The text deals, first of all, with an historical Fact. There is an antecedent fact, however, that deserves a passing thought. At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus had said to the Pharisees, "Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come." And they said among themselves, "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" Of course, that was not His thought. But it has its prophetic side—its counterpart, at least. For, here, He does not seek the Gentiles but the Gentiles seek Him. It answers to the charge, the unconscious prophecy of the Pharisees, "Behold, the world is gone after Him." And then, right after that comes the declaration that certain Greeks made the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

These men were not Greek Jews—Jews that dwelt among the Gentiles. They were real Greeks—Gentiles who, no doubt, had become proselytes. Drawn into the covenant, they had become worshippers of God according to the Old Testament usage; and they went up to Jerusalem, from time to time, to worship in the court of the Gentiles. Such, at least, is the prevailing inference. At that time, there was one name upon the lips of the people; and these Greeks had heard such wonderful things about this wonderful personage, that it became the passion of their hearts to see and hear Him for themselves. So they came to Philip with the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

We are not told whether this request was granted: and opinion is about evenly divided on this point. We know,

however, that Jesus never turned away anyone who honestly sought His presence. He scorned Herod, because that crafty prince wanted to see a miracle for the astonishment it would create. But under all proper circumstances, He responded as meekly as a servant. And if these Greeks had a sincere desire to see Jesus, and reverently approached Him through two of His disciples, we should like to feel that, somehow, Jesus satisfied the hunger of their hearts. As to the outcome, however, we do not know; for there is no record of it. But, on the part of Jesus, there was a definite result. And that brings us to the second part of our text.

2. The significance of the Fact. “And Jesus answered them”—the disciples and the Greeks alike, if we assume their presence—“The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified.” The glorification of Jesus Christ: His family had been impatient of it; His friends had longed for it and urged it; but His hour had not yet come. Here, however, there is a foretaste of it. And it comes, not from His own people, not from those who were foremost in the Temple service: it came from the Gentiles. It was an earnest of the promise, “Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.” It calls to mind the word of prophecy, “In that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek; and His rest shall be glorious.” It is a foretaste of that double promise, “The Gentiles shall come to thy light: the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”

But there is a sad intervening fact of deepest significance. It is His rejection by the Jews, which involved the sacrifice of His life: it is this that was antecedent to His acceptance on the part of the Gentiles. And Jesus knew it. And so He said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” It is the law of nature

applied to the realm of grace. The seed loses its own life to give greater life. The death of the seed is the life of the plant. The death of Christ is the life of the Church which springs from it. In the case of the plant, it is natural law working up into natural life: it is the irresistible force of nature expressing itself in a visible fact. In the case of Jesus, it is the act of His own free will manifesting itself in the mystery of divine Love. As Law is the motive-power in the death of the seed and the life of the plant; so Love is the motive-power in the death of Christ and the spiritual life of those who become His disciples. And so we have in the sphere of nature a type of the mystery of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. It makes plain alike to Jew and Gentile the principle that underlies the atonement. That is why I take to the idea that those Greeks were present: the figure fits their mental state.

Assuming their presence, mark the skill of the Master, as He adapts His figures to those whom He addresses. When He would make plain to Nicodemus the great fact of His vicarious atonement, He speaks to him as a man versed in the history of his people; and He says, "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." But when He would make this same fact plain to these Greeks—these children of nature—He does not turn to the History of God's people, as in the former case: He turns to a great well-known fact of physical life, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The fact is the same—the deep underlying thought—the figures to illustrate it are different to suit the mental attitude of those to whom He would make plain the mysteries of His Love.

The Master does not stop at that point. The principles of self-sacrificing love which passes through death

into life, is the principle upon which His disciples must act. And here He drops figure and states plain fact: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal." The man who loves this temporal life, with its temporalities—who sets his whole affection there—shall lose his soul, the real life, the life that abides. But the man who makes his world-interests take second place, who treats them as if he held them in hate, and who gives his great thought and concern to his spiritual interests: that man shall have eternal life. And what if he lose all of this life, the passing pleasures and profits that pertain to it, if only at last he gains all heaven by the sacrifice! The soul and its salvation first; the body with its interests last! That is the way Christ would have it.

One step more. It involves the blessed alternative implied in the closing verse: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." There is a depth of meaning here. It is easy to follow Christ as He marches in triumph down the mountain side, amid the Hosannas of the multitude. But when He bends beneath the scourge; when they nail His hands and feet to the accursed tree, it is not in human nature to share in His suffering and shame. But that is what is involved here. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." "And where I am"—in the humiliation of the scourge, in the suffering of the Cross, in the triumph of the Resurrection, and in the glories of the second Advent—everywhere—"there shall also My servant be." In other words, He will follow Me through the darkness out into the eternal light. And this fact has a deeper significance if we assume that these Greeks heard this mysterious statement. For the Greek conception of human life was based, not on "self-denial and sacrifice, but on self-indulgence and enjoyment."

3. We have stated the historical Fact; we have looked into the significance of that Fact; let us now be as diligent in finding some pertinent lessons based upon it. These men said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." How big a vision did they get? I do not imagine it was very large. They must have had but a vague conception of Jesus and His love. They saw a man, and nothing more. The Greek mind could not well get beyond it. And the Greek mind of our time—the Greek culture—sees only the human side of Christ. The true disciple-view is a different one. It is Thomas-like: it says, "My Lord and My God." It is John-like: it says, "This is the true God and eternal life." It is Paul-like: it declares that Christ is over all, "God blessed for ever." And that suggests another thought: We see Jesus according to the need of our lives. At one time, He is the Good Shepherd; and we gladly follow Him into the green pastures. At another time, He is the Vine; and as branches, we draw from Him the life that ever lives. Now we own Him as the Door, through which we have access to the throne of grace: now we rejoice in Him as the Rock upon which we build the whole fabric of our lives. And once again, He is all these in one. We would see Jesus: we shall see Him in all the fulness of His life and of His love, if we get the complete view that the Bible gives.

This on man's part: but is there nothing on the part of Christ? When Andrew and Philip came to Jesus and told Him that there were some Greeks present who would like to see Him, mark the effect: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Could these Greeks have anticipated it? Did they realize the joy they put into His heart? And did He rejoice simply because a couple of Gentiles sought His presence? At the break of springtide, we see a little bud bursting into life, a little blossom opening to the sunshine; and we shout the happiness of our hearts, "Spring is here!" Is it the solitary

bud and the solitary blossom that fills us with joy? They are the signs of the coming harvest—the rich fruitage, the lavish supplies that shall make glad every living creature. And what did Jesus see? Three or four Gentiles? a bud, a blossom,—nothing more? He saw the glorious fruitage. Gentile Europe swept into the Kingdom of Christ: Gentile America swept into the Kingdom of Christ: Gentile India, China, Japan, falling at His feet and singing, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name."

One more thought right here: The age is crazy over mass-force. Everything must be done on a large scale. The only true unit, men think, is the multitude. And whatever does not start out large, isn't worth while. Is that true? Nothing could be farther from the truth. It doesn't take a thousand birds to tell us that spring is here: a single note from the robin will do it. It doesn't take a blizzard to tell us that winter is come: a single snow-flake will proclaim it. Everything in this world starts on the smallest possible scale. It is the potentiality of the seed-germ—not the size of the seed—that determines the size of the tree. The Church has grown till it covers the face of the earth, because the almightiness of God is in it. The growth of a congregation depends upon the same principle. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Your Christian life and mine starts out with the life principle of the Baptismal Covenant; and by God's ordination, it will develop into the sublimities of every Christian gift and grace, if we do not choke the seed or freeze it out of our hearts.

The appeal of these Greeks cannot but touch our hearts, "Sir, we would see Jesus." It is the cry of a lost race. It is the cry of those who live in lands of darkness. It is the unconscious cry of every unregenerate heart. And right here where we live, the appeal comes to you and me, not, perhaps, by open request, but by the evident wants and desires of those whom we meet in our homes

or pass on the wayside. There is the unsettled thought, the languishing spirit, the restless tossing of the weary life. There is something lacking, something longed-for, something after which men grope. There is an emptiness of heart, and they do not know what will fill it. Let us do better even than Philip and Andrew: let us not wait for people to come to us and say, "Sir, we would see Jesus." May we rather go to them and say, "Let us lead you to Jesus." Have you ever done it? If not, lead some one to the Lord's House, next Sunday, who has never been there before; and the heart of Jesus will rejoice.

XXX

THE TROUBLED HEART

John 14:1-3. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

The sympathetic side of the life of Christ: it is this that brings Jesus so near the human heart. When we remember that He lived two thousand years ago, we do not think of the chasm of time. When we recall that He labored ten thousand miles away, we do not think of the stretch of space. He seems to belong to our age: He seems to belong right here. Every life has a claim upon His presence and participates in it—every life that is united to Him in the living fellowship of love. And what He said so long ago in that far-away land, comes as a personal message to you and me. No other man spake thus to the human heart. And does not this fact create the conviction, as well as satisfy it, that He is the Omnipotent One—the One ever-present!

The sympathetic side of the life of Christ: how He manifested it those last days of fellowship with His disciples! He knew the awful alternative that was morally impossible for Him to escape: for He was the appointed Sacrifice. And now the hour had come: how shall He meet it? Aye, how did He meet it? They were in the chamber where that last Passover was kept—He and His disciples. The supper was ended: the Holy Sacrament was instituted in its place: and now they must be strengthened for the coming conflict. He gave them the watch-

word of the Christian life, "Love": "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; by this shall all men know that ye are My disciples." And then He takes up that matchless discourse before He enters Gethsemane. The solemn hush of an impending fate was upon their hearts; the midnight hour added its sanctity to the scene; and in the stillness that all but stopped the pulse, the Saviour's voice came low and sweet, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The comfort that Christ gives: how desolate must be the heart that does not have it! The chaos of the soul: how awful the thought!

There are several things that enter into this text. An appeal, a fact on which Jesus bases it, an added appeal, a blessed prospect, a glorious promise: then rest and peace, the peace that passeth knowledge, the soul's eternal rest—all this is implied here. And we are met to fill our hearts and minds with this blessed message, to get the comfort it is designed to give. May our spirits be in tune with it!

1. "Let not your heart be troubled." A troubled heart—who does not have it? It is the universal lot; and there is no earth-cure for it. We must look to a divine source: we find it in Christ. He bases His appeal on an eternal certitude, "Ye believe in God." And the man who believes in God cannot stop there. The fact of God leads on to the fact of Christ: hence the appeal, "Believe also in Me." Jesus everywhere joins His name with God: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." "Ye believe in God." Belief in God is the basis of belief in Christ. When a man tells me that he believes in "a God,"

I am satisfied that he is a heathen at heart: he does not know the God of whom Jesus spake. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Old Testament Scriptures: that is the God in whom we believe; and believing in Him, we believe in Christ. You may set it down as a settled fact, aside from the remnant of the chosen race, that the man who does not believe in the Christ of Scripture does not believe in the God of Scripture. He simply believes in "a God," but not the God who spake by the mouth of Moses.

And the man who believes in God and in Jesus Christ whom God hath sent, why should his heart be troubled? Take the case before us. The disciples had been told that their Master should be betrayed and scourged and crucified. That surely were enough to trouble their hearts; and that is why Jesus said, "Because I have told you these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts." "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." And shall it be otherwise with us? Take two divine attributes: God is infinite in power; God is infinite in love. Let us stop right there: Infinite Power, Infinite Love. In His power, He can carry us safely through all our troubles: in His love, He will do it. What is lacking? Nothing on God's part. The lack lies in us: we fall short in trust. And it is this that gives point to the appeal of Christ, "Ye believe in God; believe also in Me." Trust Me! Pain? Yes; we shall have pain, but we shall have grace to bear it. Sorrows? Yes; sorrows shall come as they came before, but the comforts of Christ will be there to draw the pain from the wounded spirit. Faith in God; Faith in Christ, whom God hath sent: this is the gift of grace that calms the troubled heart.

2. "Let not your heart be troubled." The very person of Christ, His appeal and promise, should be sufficient for His disciples. He would, however, give them added assurance. And so, He would have them lift up their

eyes and look beyond the Cross with all its suffering and shame. And what a vision they now get: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." The Cross, therefore, was but a passing incident. It was not the end of Jesus' existence: it was the means by which they were to enter into life. The Father's House, the mansions there: how shall the disciples reach that blest abode! Not by works of righteousness which we have done: men cannot build mansions in the skies; it takes almighty power to do it. Poor earth-creatures: how could they prepare heavenly places? And what confidence could they have in Christ, if He were but an earth-creature like themselves? If He were but a man like themselves, He would but mock at their sorrows with His empty promise. For the promise that does not have God back of it is surely an empty one.

These words have been the comfort of God's people ever since their first utterance. We think of the ascended Jesus there, the mansions made ready there, our dear kindred there. We forget the Cross, because we know He wears the Crown and they live and reign in His presence. We forget the grave, because He has taken His place upon the throne, and they are with Him in those mansions of heavenly rest. The passing view is pushed out of thought. The eternal view fills mind and heart with comfort and peace. "In My Father's House are many mansions": it is this fact that gives us courage to live. If some terrible calamity were appointed for your life, and you knew it; what would be the result? You would either grow callous to it and court it, or you would sink in utter despair at the prospect. And with death before the human race, how do men regard it? Some have hardened their hearts: they have grown callous to it. Is that the way we approach it? We draw near to it, not in view of the grave and the work of dissolution that will be done there: we

look beyond to the mansions promised by Christ; and we know that so many of ours are there, and that we shall have our home with them there.

And what is the result? We have comfort and patience in the midst of the sorest trials of life. They cannot last; and when they end, all will be peace. The death the Saviour died, we must die: the life the Saviour lives, we shall live. He has gone a little before: we shall follow, one by one. The Father's House is large; the mansions are ready for us there; Jesus has gone and prepared the place: and then

"Forever with the Lord;
Amen, so let it be!"

3. "Let not your heart be troubled." There is completeness to Jesus' promise: He will not drop out of their life and stay eternally out of it. He will finish His work here; He will make ready the mansions there; and then comes the promise that gives them the abiding hope, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." That promise must have meant much to His disciples. His daily presence must surely have been the joy of their life. And that is why they feel so keenly His departure. But now, they are inspired by a great hope; and they would wait for the glorious appearing of their God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus would love them there as He had loved them here. The fellowship of love cannot die: it bridges the chasm of the grave. Our dear ones love there as they loved here. And at last it will be restored and, stript of all earthly defilement, it shall be renewed in the mansions above.

The departure of Jesus took nothing out of the lives of His enemies: they were glad that He was dead and gone. The entrance of Jesus into the Father's House put neither comfort nor hope into their hearts. When Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you: I will come again

and receive you unto Myself," He is speaking to His disciples, and to no one else. In order, therefore, that we may be encouraged by this promise, we must be in the number of His disciples. And as the disciples made His fellowship their chief delight, so must we. The Father's House is the Home of the soul: and the soul must find its purest fellowship there, in service and sermon and song of praise. And that fellowship must be regular and definite. We must wait regularly upon the ministrations of God's House: we must participate regularly in the Holy Sacrament. It is a lamentable fact, and a startling one, that if every Church throughout the land were closed this day, less than half the church people would feel the loss of the service. It would take nothing out of their lives simply because the Church puts nothing into their lives. So much for the passing present.

But what about that great future fact, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The second coming of Christ, His coming in glory to summon His saints and take them home: do we dwell upon it—the best of us, the most devout? Do we delight to think of the time when, as perfect spiritual existences, soul and body shall meet, unite, and dwell forever in God's holy presence? The glorious end, the grand consummation, when we and our own dear kindred, with the saints of every age, shall rise and ascend to meet the Lord as He comes to receive the ransomed of our race! O the rapture of it: the thrill of it! It should have a place in our thoughts: our moments of solitude should be brightened by it; our meditation on it should be sweet.

4. There is another side from which to view this subject, and we should not forget it. The disciples of Christ are not to be troubled because He leaves their visible presence. And when He comes again, they shall surely rejoice. But what of those who are not troubled at His

departure: what of those when He comes? Then they shall be troubled; for He shall descend with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment. And they shall call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the rocks to hide them from His presence: for He shall be to them a consuming fire. Let us not be wise above what is written: let us not rebel in our hearts against it. "He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace." "Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come."

Let us turn from the picture of judgment to the picture of love. Let us see ourselves as the disciples of Christ. And let us find comfort in His words, "Let not your heart be troubled." Why should we worry and fret over the little things of life? We believe in God: we know Him as a loving Father through Jesus Christ. And we believe in Christ: He died that we might live. We believe, moreover, that He will do all that He has promised. When He tells us, "In My Father's House are many mansions," we believe it; for He came forth from the Father and was come into the world. When He tells us, "I go to prepare a place for you," we believe it, because He left the world and went unto the Father. And when He tells us, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," we believe it, for that is the promise of all Scripture.

The troubled heart—what comfort it finds in Christ! In the world we have tribulation: it could not be otherwise. "But," says Jesus, "be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The little span of life will soon be past, and then we shall gain all we ever lost—and infinitely more. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have

entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Those mansions—their beauty and glory and delight: what can measure it! Our loved ones and ourselves united there—without a pain, a sorrow, a care; none of those little weaknesses and worriments that marred our earthly lives; all the harshness of our natures smoothed out—each wrinkle gone—not a line to show the deep furrows once plowed across our earthen face; the fretfulness gone; nothing there that maketh a lie; the heart hunger, the heart thirst, no longer there! And in their stead, rest and peace and pleasures forever more! What a prospect!

Poor troubled heart: "Let not your heart be troubled." All too soon this troubled life will be past. Let us work while it is day, not worry about it. Let us make our calling and election in Christ Jesus sure; and then, when the mansions are ready, and we are ready for the mansions, Christ will come according to His promise, and take us home.

XXXI

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

John 15:4-5. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

It would be intensely interesting to gather all the passages of Scripture that illustrate the believer's relations to Christ and arrange them in the order that marks the progressive stages of the spiritual life. They are so apt, so suggestive: they give the abstract a concrete shape; they set the mystical before the eyes in bodily outline; and thus they prove by nature the reasonableness of the things of grace. When Jesus says, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches," He suggests a line of thought and quickens a conviction with respect to it, that would be impossible by argument. It presupposes relations of which we never dreamt; it hints at spiritual processes which we did not even suspect to exist; it drives out doubts that nothing else seems able to supplant. In point of effectiveness, they supply in our hearts and minds the place of miracle in the minds and hearts of the disciples.

It would seem that Jesus would stoop to our weaknesses just as He did to their weaknesses. We cannot see and measure His miracles: we have, indeed, the record and we fix our faith there. We accept them as witnesses of His omnipotence and love. But they do not bring us into living touch with His life. They are altogether objective—quite outside of ourselves and our experiences. It is otherwise when we come to the sayings of Christ. "I am the Good Shepherd: I know My sheep and am known of

Mine.” That includes you and me: it brings us into the living fellowship of His loving care. It marks the outward fellowship of the life in Christ. “I am the Vine, ye are the branches.” There is more than the outward relation here: it marks a vital union—His life flowing into our life, His life the very life of our life. When Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out devils; we are, by faith, no more than witnesses of such scenes. But when He says to His disciples, “I am the Vine, ye are the branches,” we feel the impulse and the impact as much as if He spoke directly to us. For we are His disciples and we claim our share in all His promises. And so, unlike the miracles, which were performed in part that we might see and believe, these declarations of grace are spoken directly to our individual hearts and are expressive of the vital union between His life and our life. The text, therefore, has its distinctively personal side for you and me.

1. This text is not for those outside of Christ: at most, it but warns them of their utter deadness, as branches that are severed from the vine. This text is, primarily, for those to whom Jesus can say, “I am the Vine, ye are the branches.” And to every such one He says, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” Abide in Christ and Christ will abide in you: that is what Jesus urges here. And in urging it, He declares Himself to be the life-principle of our life. In short, He declares that mystical union which is so utterly incomprehensible: the highest thought cannot attain unto it. In that prayer just before He went forth to die, Jesus said, “As Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee”: “I in them and Thou in Me.” What an interlocking of life! Christ in God and God in Christ; Christ in man and man in Christ: the human life the outflow of the divine life, the divine life the essential principle of the human life! Mystery of mysteries: who shall ever solve it!

It is all clear to the mind of God; for He established the relations of the spiritual life: but our poor finite minds

cannot grasp it. There are some things, however, that we can understand. We cannot understand life; but we can understand the workings of life. We cannot understand the secrets of nature—the invisible, intangible principle operating there; but the operations themselves are open to our eyes. The process of the new birth—who can follow it? “The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” The process is invisible; the effect is evident. And so, when Jesus says, “Abide in Me and I in you,” we accept the fact; but we cannot touch the principle that produces the effect. We know, indeed, that the fact will be there as long as the fellowship is there: we know, too, the means of fellowship—Word and Sacrament. But the inner working is His alone who said, “Let there be light; and there was light.” But who knows how He produced it.

2. And yet there are things that we can understand. We cannot see God; but we can know God, in finite measure, by the things He has made. We cannot see the vital union between the vine and the branches; but we know if we cut off the branches, they will bear no fruit. And we know how to apply this fact to our own spiritual lives. And that is what Jesus makes plain when He says, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” That is about as clear as language can make it.

It ought not to be necessary to enlarge upon this point: it would not be, if men were as ready as they are to accept it in practical life. If you cut off a vine whose fruit is in an advanced stage of development, the ripening process will continue. But next season there will be no fruit. The severed branch might say, “Behold, I ripen my fruit without the vine”; but the following season will prove the claim to be false. We are told by science that there

are stars so far distant, if they should be blotted out of the skies, the rays that have shot out from their surface would shine upon our earth for ages. When the bullet leaves the gun, the force ceases; but it does not stop till the force that sent it is spent. And the man who cuts himself off from the Church that he may give himself to what he calls the larger service of life, may advance for a time by the vital energy that the Church has put into his spirit; just as the sap, for a season, keeps the severed branch alive, or the propelling force of the gun keeps the bullet in motion till that force is spent. But the light of the dead star will go out in darkness, and the light of the soul that has become dead unto Christ will cease to shine.

“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” The former is a physical fact: its truth is beyond dispute. The latter is a spiritual fact: it must be true; for Jesus declares it. The man who cuts himself off from Christ dies just as surely as the branch dies if it is cut off from the vine. And no man is in true union with Christ who is not in the full fellowship of the Church of Christ. Every grape that grows on the branch grows there because the vine has nourished it. The truly good works of life are the fruit of faith in Christ. And every one who has true faith in Christ will keep in closest fellowship with the Church of Christ. There is a tendency, these times, to exalt social service above Christian fellowship. If it were not for Christian fellowship, there would be no social service. On the other hand, if Christian fellowship does not lead to social service, it is a branch without fruit. And by social service, I do not mean any and every fanatical movement that storms the senses: I mean that spiritual force that goes out into a community, putting pure impulses into every part and lifting up into nobler spheres—a spiritual force which

goes out to its purpose as directly and as effectively as the vital force goes from the vine into the branches and develops the fruit there. You cannot raise grapes with the whip-lash or the fire-brand; and yet, there are times when the pruning-knife must be called into service.

3. The next verse of the text simply adds new emphasis to the one that precedes it: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." I lay it down as a Christian principle that we must abide in Christ and Christ must abide in us, if we are to be genuinely fruitful in our lives. I stand by the principle of Scripture, as St. Paul enunciated it, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." A man may be a follower of Christ in works of love, and yet be an enemy of the Cross of Christ. And though men of that type call Him "Lord, Lord," He will say, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." A good work that affects only our moral and social bodily life may do as much to undermine faith in Christ as deeds of shame. If it leads a man to say, "My conduct is my Christ," though it may help the body, it kills the spirit. And so, whatever temporal blessing may follow works outside of Christ, they are not fruit as Christ would have us understand it.

"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." The only true fruit of life, according to the standard of Scripture, is that which grows out of fellowship with Christ. Of all human works, therefore, that are outside of Christ, we cannot but declare, "One thing is needful: one thing is lacking yet." They are like a locomotive without steam to drive it. Oh yes, men may push it along the track, if it is level and straight; but they soon tire of it. And if it is down-grade, they will likely ditch it. And men for a time may push moral enterprise, without Christ in the heart. But their efforts do not last, and they commonly wind up by smashing things to pieces. And so, we are driven back to the prin-

ciple that the only true fruit of life is that which grows out of fellowship with Christ.

And if we have fellowship with Christ; if He is the Vine and we are the branches; if we abide in Him and He abides in us; then we must bring forth much fruit: it will be the moral necessity of our lives. I most sincerely believe that every work outside of Christ is written in dust; but I just as sincerely believe that every one who abides in Christ must do works worthy of Christ. And what shall they be? The same in essence as He performed: the same as the disciples performed in His name. He went about doing good: He went out and sought service. And everywhere the physical and the spiritual were combined into one. And you and I must not sit still and wait for want, with hollow eye, to stagger into our presence: we must go out upon the highways of life, with the kind of service and the degree of service that each wanderer needs and that we are gifted to supply, and meet the necessity as God gives us grace. If the Spirit of Christ is in our hearts, the love of Christ is there; and the love of Christ will constrain us to do in finite measure what He did in infinite degree. A Christless work has no permanent value: a workless Christ—how shall we define it? It is the people of the Church of Christ who do nothing for Christ's sake, in Christ's Name. What does St. Mark say? He tells us that, after the Ascension, the disciples "went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." In each and every one of them, we have the working Christ; but in so many of His disciples of our time, we have the workless Christ. He wishes to work through His disciples; but so many of them sit down and will not let Him do it.

And yet He says, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." If Christ is the life of our life, then He will be the agent of our activities. And just as surely as we live in His love, so

surely shall we perform His works of love. There are two kinds of fruit: the fruits of the Spirit in our lives, working the Christian graces there; the fruits of our love in other lives, doing Christian service there. The one is passive; the other is active: the one is antecedent; the other is consequent. They are the halves of the Christian sphere: they round out the Christian life.

And now, let us turn to the last clause of the text for our concluding thought, "Without Me, ye can do nothing." Let men outside the Church project what they please; as far as we associate ourselves with them in their service, we dare not leave Christ out of it. We cannot say, I will take Christ into all my church work and church life; but in business and social and civic work and life, I will enter there alone. You cannot do it: you dare not attempt it. You might as well say as you go forth to work, This belongs to my physical life, I will leave my soul at home. Wherever you go, the whole man goes: whatever you do, the whole man does. "Without Me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." If Christ is your life, as the Apostle puts it, Christ is a part of your thought; Christ is a part of your word; Christ is a part of your act: Christ thinks and speaks and works through your life. He is not a mere Sunday Christ, a mere Church Christ: He is an every-day Christ, an every-minute Christ. And so, He enters into every phase of our life: work-life, social-life, home-life, as well as worship-life.

And if we were conscious of this fact, and sensitive to it, what an uplift that would give to all our lives! We abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us, the relation a vital one like vine and branches: shall we not pray for it? shall we not strive for it? shall we not cultivate it? Let us live so close to Christ in our Church-life, by Word and Sacrament, that we shall want to keep Him in all our world-life.

XXXII

QUESTIONS THAT CONDEMN

John 21:21-22. Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

These words, with the context, have puzzled Bible students since the day of their utterance. It is easy to make guesses, however wide of the mark we may come: it is not so easy to get at the exact sense. And the exact sense of Scripture is what we want. We do not care to deal with mere probabilities in matters that touch upon our soul's eternal estate. The risk is all but infinite.

We may, however, picture the scene and draw our inference. We can reach *a* truth, if not *the* truth, which the scene suggests. There are three persons who figure here: Jesus and two of His disciples. Jesus had just put to Peter that searching question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And when He had uttered those other words which signified by what death Peter should glorify God, He said, "Follow Me." The other disciple was John who was standing, it would seem, a short distance from this scene. Peter turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" As if he said, "What of him? What kind of a death shall he die? If I am to be a martyr for Thy sake, what kind of a martyrdom shall his be?" And then came the answer of the text, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me." It is just at this point where we lose ourselves. It is plain that there is a prophecy here with respect to the two disciples: the death of Peter and the kind of death he should die; the life of John and a certain

point to which he should live. But the fact, in John's case, is not so evident. He lived to see the Holy City in ashes: which is set as the coming of Christ in Judgment. He lived to write the Apocalypse: which is the crowning revelation of Scripture, and which bears the message of Christ, "Behold, I come"—an event which John saw in spirit. But it is, at most, a matter of conjecture as to which of these may be meant.

The last time that Jesus met His disciples, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Mark the answer He gave, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." And what does that mean? It means that there are certain things which we cannot know, certain things we should not know; and that God has set the limit to our knowledge. And this incident, coupled with the text, suggests the line of thought I should like to follow tonight.

1. We are prone to ask questions beyond the sphere of human knowledge. And God gives us the answer of the text, "What is that to thee?" There are people who would like to pry into the great creative act: they want to know just how this world was made. They are not satisfied unless they can see the physical cause back of the physical effect. And so, when they read the first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth," they stagger at it. They are not willing to take God at His word. They know, indeed, what the Psalmist says, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth: For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." They know, too, what is recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews on this very point, "The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things that do appear." If that means anything, it means that the visible universe

is not evolved, by natural forces, from any pre-existent substance! God did not merely make invisible substance visible: He spake; and where there was no substance, substance came: He commanded; and that substance took its appointed form and place, and kept it. We cannot understand it: it is beyond the sphere of human knowledge.

Why then, should we believe it? I will tell you why I believe it. I have such supreme confidence in God's infinite might, that I believe He could do anything which the Bible says He has done. If He could not do it, the attribute of Almightyness would be lacking in the divine nature. And then, I have such supreme confidence in the Scriptures, as God's Word, perfect in every line, that I believe He has done just what the Bible says He has done. That is the way the Apostle looked at it: "Through Faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God." And if we have the Apostolic faith, we shall have the Apostolic assurance. Do you know how anything was made that God made? Do you know how God frames the turnip or cabbage, the rose-bush or oak-tree? Do you know how the food you eat becomes tooth or nail, hair or hide, flesh or bone? You know absolutely nothing about it. And you do not stop eating because you do not understand it. And why should you stop believing, or refuse to believe, because you cannot understand how God made the universe? Aye, "What is that to thee?" What business have you or I to pry into infinite things when we cannot comprehend the things that are finite? The Lord said to Peter, "Follow Me!" And Peter received all the light he needed to carry him safely through this world into the next. And, meantime, he was enabled to glorify God in his life. And we shall have a like blessed experience, with a like blessed outcome, if we heed His voice when He says to us as He said to His disciples, "Take up your cross and follow Me."

2. We are prone to ask questions to no profit. And

again we shall get the answer, "What is that to thee?" If the farmer knew just how this earth was made, would that help him to raise a better harvest? If the builder knew how the rocks were formed or how trees grow, would that help him to frame a better house? I am fully satisfied on this one point—I have such supreme trust in God's wisdom and love—that He will keep His promise, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." And if there would be any advantage in knowing those things which are withheld from our sight, He would certainly reveal them to our eyes. And the very fact that He draws a veil over them should satisfy us; and we should confess with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me."

When Jesus turned the water into wine, the wedding guests did not crowd around and inquire, "How did you do it?" When He fed the multitude with the loaves and fishes, they did not refuse to eat because they could not understand the miracle. The unseen process: what advantage is there in knowing it? When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, he staggered at the announcement of the New Birth; and he gasped in amazement, "How can these things be?" But Jesus did not tell him: the man could not have understood it. This, however, is what Jesus did say, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" In the last analysis, the appeal is to faith and not to knowledge.

The demand of Scripture is, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And since I have obeyed that command, I am certain of the promise: I am sure of the remission of my sins; I am sure of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. I am not worrying about processes: I do not know how it was done: I could not understand it if I did know: but

I am just as well satisfied as if I knew all that God knows about it. If I plant a seed, I do not know why it sprouts or how it grows; but I am confident that it will become all that God meant it to be, and that, in due season, I shall get the fruit God put into its nature. It wouldn't grow any faster; it wouldn't blossom any sooner; the fruit wouldn't be any better, by my knowing the processes of its development—that unseen power that was hid in the heart of the seed and made it grow into the fulness of its life. And when we begin to question about the power of the Word, the efficacy of the Sacraments, the cleansing might be of the blood of Christ—the knowledge of which would not bring us the slightest spiritual profit, we can almost hear Jesus say to us, as He said to Peter, “What is that to thee?”

3. We are prone to ask questions when we ought to act. That seems to have been the trouble here. After Jesus had asked three times, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?” and Peter had given the answer of his heart, Jesus said, “Follow Me.” Instead of turning and following Christ, Peter turned toward John, and asked, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” And then came the rebuke, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me.” He makes it imperative and emphatic, “Follow Thou Me.” It was not Peter's part to meddle with Christ's plan for any of the other disciples: it was for him to obey his Master; and to be prompt about it.

This trait of Peter is by no means an unnatural or an uncommon one. It is perfectly human to hold back and wait to see what the other man is going to do. Men like to do things by crowds: they are always ready to go with the multitude. The first ten names to a document are the most difficult to get. The first ten subscribers to a cause are the hardest to secure. If you can touch the popular pulse, the mass will rush to your side and shout your praise. But the cohesive quality is not there; and

the multitude soon scatters and is gone. The only thing that lasts is the hold on the individual heart. If a man follows Christ, it matters not where his companion goes, he will be faithful to the very end: nothing can keep him from going where his Master goes, and doing what his Master directs. It does not mean that he is indifferent to his friend's welfare; but it does mean that no friendship is strong enough to draw him away from Christ.

The most of us are too much influenced by what the other man does. If he joins the Church; we'll join it. If he stays out of the Church; we'll stay out of it. So much for the men we like. As for the men we do not like: if they are members of the Church, that is enough for us: we will have no fellowship where such men are. Any way you take it, it is perfectly childish to be controlled by our likes or dislikes. The real question is one of fellowship with Christ. And if we love Him with all the heart; if we respond at once to His call, "Follow Me," we shall not be looking around to see what kind of people are entering into His service. The man who is next to the king's throne, is he going to quit because there is someone else in the king's service whom he does not like? Rank and honor and equipage are his; and no man, no rival even, can cheat him out of it. And if you hold a place near the King's Throne—King of kings and Lord of lords—you will not cast off your loyal allegiance because of the presence, or the absence, of someone else. Aside from that fact, there is the personal duty and privilege to which you stand pledged as a disciple, and you dare not be indifferent to it.

I am afraid, however, that there are too few who look to the interests of their associates. There is a certain sense in which it is proper for us to ask, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" And Christ will not reprove us for asking it. We must not only follow Christ; but we must try to make everyone who comes under our influence a

follower of Christ. And how shall we do it? First, and above all, by our manner of life. Our speech should be so pure, our habits should be so correct, our business-life or work-life, whatever it may be, should be so absolutely straight; the places we go, the things we do, the crowd with which we mingle: these should be such as to commend us under all circumstances. For the inner life is bound to come to the surface; and character is written in letters that are very large. And then, back of that outward life, there must be the open confession of Christ. In times of persecution, a man might be a secret disciple of Christ—some timid nature. But in this age, when every man may do that which seems good in his own eyes, one who truly believes in Christ should openly confess His name. He should heed the call, "Follow thou Me." He should serve Christ in and through His Church.

Do you tell me there are people in the Church who are not living as they should live? What is that to thee? If you know the correct Christian life, live it; and put such people to shame. I have no doubt that the most of us might lead better lives: we might be more charitable; we might be less critical; the spirit of envy and jealousy and hate may have too large a place in our hearts. But the Church did not put it there; the sermons from the pulpit do not encourage it; the doctrines of the Church do not foster it. The Church is no more to blame for the bad people that are in it than a hospital is to blame for the sick people that are there. Christ is in His Church; and the Church in which He lives ought to be good enough for you and me. He would have us take our eyes off everybody else: He would have us fix them on Him and Him alone. And as to what men say or how they act, His answer is, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

The following after Christ: that is the supreme thing for you and me. And the way to follow Him is to be in His Church, living pure lives there: the way to follow

Him is to be in His Church, receiving His Gospel into good and honest hearts, partaking of that Sacrament concerning which He says, "Do this in remembrance of Me," and living godly and soberly and righteously in all our lives.

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